Academic and Vocational Education in British Columbia:

Educational Divide and Social Stigma

By

Sandeep Kaur

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We accept the Thesis as conforming to the required standard

Dr. Michael Hammond-Todd, Thesis Supervisor
Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University  Date:

Dr. David Paterson, Dean, Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University  Date:

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Abstract

This research examines the elements related to stigma within post-secondary Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. The thesis describes the primary components that obtain stigma in vocational education system. A number of factors such as the perceptions of public and students about VET programmes, parental influence, levels of support for students and the attraction to employment, contribute to the relatively weak success of these programmes. The researcher examined common concern behind the stigma, initiative taken to overcome the stigma, factors that increase this stigma and explored the presence of stigma in this date. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with young students who are pursuing VET programmes at Vancouver Island University (VIU). 17 vocational students were interviewed from three different programmes – Automotive, Carpentry, and Electronics Training. The stigma discussed in this research did not pertain in data analysis. However, a distinct kind of stigma was involved in participants’ responses. The final Chapter discusses the significance of this research and makes recommendation for future studies.
Table of Contents

Title Page ........................................................................................................................................1
Abstract ........................................................................................................................................2
Table of Contents ..........................................................................................................................3
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................7
List of Tables .................................................................................................................................8
Table 1.1: Research Question and Hypothesis of Present Research...........................................13
Table 2.1: Programme-specific and Foundation Subjects ..........................................................32
Table 2.2: Liberal Markets and Education Logics vs. Coordinated Markets and Employment Logics................................................................................................................................43
Table 2.3: List of Stigmas Perceived by Choi, & Miller for Career Counselling......................52
Table 3.1: Major Characteristics of Qualitative Research .......................................................56
Table 3.2: Establishing Trustworthiness during each phase of Thematic Analysis ...............58
Table 3.3: Procedure Followed to Conduct the Research .........................................................61
Table 5.1: Representation of Categories Associated with Participants’ Responses .............84
Table 5.2: Representation of Outliers Associated with Participants’ Responses ..................85
List of Figures ...............................................................................................................................9
Figure 4.1: Name of various programmes with different levels .............................................66
Figure 4.2: Number of Participants of different Ages ............................................................67
Figure 4.3: Coding Categories using Thematic Analysis .......................................................69
Chapter 1: Problem to be Investigated .........................................................................................10
  Introduction .................................................................................................................................10
  Purpose of the Study ...............................................................................................................10
  Justification of the Study .......................................................................................................11
  Research Question and Hypothesis .......................................................................................12
Overview of Key Research Areas and Topics..............................................14
Research Rationale, Limitations and Contributions........................................16
Chapter Summary.................................................................................................16

Chapter 2: Literature Review............................................................................18
Introduction............................................................................................................18

Section - 1: Overcoming Vocational Prejudice.................................................18
Cross-cultural study............................................................................................19
  Arab society – second rate image of VET.........................................................19
  United Kingdom – world skill competition......................................................20
  India – low parity of esteem of VET.................................................................21
  European Union/Members – multilevel partnership approaches..................22
  Central and Eastern European countries – modernisation of VET...............24
Educational institutions in the UK education system......................................26
Role of media and technology in UK world skill competition......................28

Section - 2: The Vocational-Academic Divide.................................................29
Family history....................................................................................................29
Educational institutions’ favouritism in selection............................................30
Educational institutions’ division of VET and HEP programmes.....................31
Cross - cultural study..........................................................................................33
  Finland, Iceland and Sweden – core division between academic and vocational
  programmes....................................................................................................33
  United States – abstract minded versus manually minded...........................40
  Canada – characteristics of transition systems..............................................42
Role of media and technology in Quebec and Ontario..................................45
Educational institutions’ favouritism in Canada..............................................46
Section – 3: The Role of Personal, Self and Public Stigmas

Stigma experienced regarding SMI

Stigma experienced regarding career counselling

Stigma experienced regarding career counselling within a cultural context

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3: Procedures and Methods

Introduction

Research Overview and Methodology

Informal Survey and Thematic Analysis

Description of the Population studied

Description of the Instrument used

Explanation of the Procedures followed

Discussion of Validity

Limitation to Research Validity

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Introduction

About Vancouver Island University (VIU)

Programmes

Interview Information

Thematic analysis and Results

Findings

Employment security

Personal/Favourite choice

Experiential learning/escape from academia
Options/job awareness...........................................................................................71
Upgrading skills....................................................................................................72
Short & specific training programs.......................................................................73
Financial security...............................................................................................73
Monetary feasibility.............................................................................................74
Career change......................................................................................................75
Friends and family support...................................................................................76
Knowledge matters.............................................................................................76
Positive responses..............................................................................................77

Chapter Summary.................................................................................................78

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations.........................................................80
Introduction..........................................................................................................80
Correlation of Themes and Present Research......................................................80
Theme #1: Overcoming Vocational Prejudice.......................................................81
Theme #2: The Vocational-Academic Divide.......................................................81
Theme #3: The Role of Personal, Self and Public Stigmas.................................83
Discussion of Findings.........................................................................................84
Recommendations for the Future.........................................................................88
Conclusion...........................................................................................................90

References...........................................................................................................92

Appendix..............................................................................................................96
TCPS Certificate..................................................................................................96
Recruitment Letter................................................................................................96
Consent Form........................................................................................................97
Questionnaire.........................................................................................................100
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List of Tables

Table 1.1: Research Question and Hypothesis of Present Research.................................13
Table 2.1: Programme-specific and Foundation Subjects.....................................................32
Table 2.2: Liberal Markets and Education Logics vs. Coordinated Markets and Employment Logics.................................................................................................................................43
Table 2.3: List of Stigmas Perceived by Choi, & Miller for Career Counselling....................52
Table 3.1: Major Characteristics of Qualitative Research....................................................56
Table 3.2: Establishing Trustworthiness during each phase of Thematic Analysis..............58
Table 3.3: Procedure Followed to Conduct the Research.....................................................61
Table 5.1: Representation of Categories Associated with Participants’ Responses.............84
Table 5.2: Representation of Outliers Associated with Participants’ Responses.................85
List of Figures

Figure 4.1: Name of various programmes with different levels...............................................66
Figure 4.2: Number of Participants of different Ages..............................................................67
Figure 4.3: Coding Categories using Thematic Analysis...........................................................69
Chapter 1: Problem to be Investigated

But I think there is a stigma that if you do not go to school you cannot be successful. I thing that stigma need to be taken away because in reality you can be successful as electrician and as a teacher as well. – (response of Participant #16)

Introduction

This Chapter presents an overview of research that examined the views of vocational students at Vancouver Island University regarding the stigma associated with vocational sector. It provides the information about why the research is being done; why this research is required to be done and what is meant to be attained through this research. Three themes are explored in this research: Overcoming vocational prejudice, the vocational-academic divide, and role of public, personal, and self-stigma. The purpose of this research is to bring awareness regarding vocational prejudice that existed for a long time in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. The vocational prejudicerefers to the traditional prejudgements some people have when they prefer academic route over vocational route while enrolling in a particular programme, depending on the demand and attractiveness of academics in society rather than preferring their own interest in skills. The research is done to gather information if these judgments still exist and whether the stigma attached to this social distinction affected vocational students at Vancouver Island University (VIU) or not. This Chapter presents purpose of the study, justification of the study, research question and hypothesis, overview of key research area and topics, research rational, limitations and contributions and Chapter summary that include the work done in the rest of the document as well.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of the present study is to address the vocational-academic divide and vocational prejudice. By vocational prejudice, I mean the influence on vocational and trade sector when it is being stigmatised within a person and outside in society where a person with academic education is recognised as being from higher socio-economic background whereas a person with vocational education is regarded as being from poor socio-economic background.

Chankseliani, James Relly, and Laczik (2016) demonstrated in their article that Find a Future works closely with four different associations to ensure that the work and message of skills competitions reach to young people, the Further Education (FE) sector, employers and training providers. However, the lack of systematic mechanisms to inform these stakeholders about skills competitions (read more about skills competitions in Chapter 2) often prevents the message from spreading. In aiming to become “one of the top eight countries in the world for skills, jobs and productivity” (UKCES, 2009), the Coalition Government’s Vocational Education Training (VET) policy was primarily focused on qualifications, institutional reform and cuts in public expenditure. This policy was established in UK to refashion the image and purpose of VET by using the terms technical education, practical learning, and craft skills (Fuller & Unwin, 2011, p. 192). Herein lies the problem: it is not just about increasing the number of qualifications into the labour market but making the vocational education and training route to be seen as attractive to young people (Chankseliani, James Relly, & Laczik, 2016, p. 583). Read more about what is being done so far to make VET as attractive as academic in Chapter 2.

Justification of the Study

For some there is a social distinction attached to a stigma that implies a value of a person’s worth depending on whether they have pursued an academic or a vocational educational program. This stigma put upon the vocational person will often minimize
opportunities for growth and advancement. This is because, while recruiting graduates, employers prefer student from traditional academic background rather than students from VET background (Fisher & Simmons, 2012, p. 34).

Rutter (2013, as cited in Chankseliani, James Relly, &Laczik, 2016, p. 583) demonstrated that the general perception of VET is predominantly identified as low-skilled manual work with little or no progression opportunities. The vocational route is considered inferior to the academic one, attracting disproportionately high numbers of low-income students who may be excluded from general/academic education and often come from areas of multiple disadvantages (Lewis, 1994; Pring et al., 2009; Cabinet Office, 2011; Crawford et al., 2011, as cited in Chankseliani, James Relly, &Laczik, 2016, p. 582). Chankseliani et al. (2016) recognised that the relative unattractiveness of VET may stem from the historically lower levels of esteem for manual workers when compared with those who could afford to engage with theoretical ideas and knowledge (Silver & Brennan, 1988; Hyland & Winch, 2007, as cited in Chankseliani, James Relly, &Laczik, 2016, p. 582).

In addition, the vocational/academic divide needs to be viewed in the context of the weaknesses and strengths of the VET sector. The latter include but are not limited to abundant examples of good practice in VET, flexibility of the sector and diversity of VET provision. However, some of the weaknesses do not allow these strengths to be translated into across-the-board excellence. Uncertainty about funding, a lack of in-depth engagement of employers, and the low status of VET and instability of the VET sector are among the weaknesses (Chankseliani, James Relly, &Laczik, 2016, p. 583). Thus, the given research question should be investigated to change the long standing belief system or mindset that people have had for a long time while defining the term *education* that must consider these vocational skills.

**Research Question and Hypothesis**
Table 1.1

Research Question and Hypothesis of Present Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what degree if any, do vocational students at VIU report regarding the presence of a social distinction (and attached stigma) of a person, based on their education path when comparing people from both Vocational and Academic paths?</td>
</tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Hypothesis #1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Coaching and leading VET programmes will increase educators’ as well as students’ awareness regarding improving its reputation in the society.</td>
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<th>Hypothesis #2</th>
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<tr>
<td>There might be no existence of stigma among vocational students and they might not aware about vocational-academic divide. Thus, the stigma might exist at community level or in society’s perspective but not for the students who are pursuing the VET sector.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above research question is proposed for the present study because vocational education is often considered as secondary choice during the transition time from high school to university studies. We know vocational and academic education each have their own characteristics. However, both routes are always compared based on societal stigma (described in the next section) present even in the 21st century.

The above mentioned hypotheses of the present study are proposed because I think there might be less awareness about programmes that are offered by VET sector. VET sector has low-status in society because it is always categorized as labour work sector. If someone made an effort to know about these programmes then they might come to know that it include technical reasoning, rational thinking, problem solving, and real life scenario practicum. In
addition, I have assumed that vocational students are pretty happy with their choices and they
might not aware about vocational-academic stigma. Thus, stigmas (public, personal and self)
might exist at community level or in society’s perspective but not for the students who are
pursuing the VET sector.

**Overview of Key Research Areas and Topics**

*Social distinction* means differences made on the basis of someone’s social and family
background. Nori (2011) found that university selection processes favour children with the
most educated parents from the highest social statuses. The socioeconomic status (including
educational status (ES)) and social class of a family are the main structural factors that
influence the career construction of children (Soresi et al., 2014; Whiston & Keller, 2004, as

The *stigma* explored in this research has three categories: Personal-stigma, public-
stigma and self-stigma. The stigma that has an influence through the direct personal reactions
of those with whom we interact is termed as *personal stigma*. The influence of stigma at the
societal level usually referred to as *public stigma* and when the effects of these stigmas
internalized in an individual then it becomes *self-stigma* (Ludwikowski, Vogel & Armstrong,

The *education path* can be categorized in two divisions: Higher Educational
Preparatory (HEP) programmes and Vocational Education and Training (VET)
programmes. Students in VET programmes are trained to “do” and to “adapt”, while the
students in HEP programmes are trained to “think” and to “imagine possibilities” (Nylund et
al., p. 788). In HEP programmes, the focus is on more abstract and general relationships:
[Society-individual], [man-nature], [thought-action], [theory-practice]. By contrast, VET
programmes essentially focus on relationships in the workplace: [Worker-customer],
[colleague-colleague], [worker–work place] (Nylund et al., 2017, p. 797). VET programmes
Vocational Education and Stigmas

essentially follow and adapt to laws that are underlined, while HEP programmes emphasise understanding the law’s controlling effect and what conditions might be established in different contexts (p. 799). Also, the diversity of perspectives is more for HEP programmes while perspective wealth is missing in VET programmes (p. 804). Thus, the discourse in HEP programmes is of a more vertical character and rewards more general skills, while the dominant discourse in VET programmes is more horizontal and rewards more contextual skills (p. 796). That is why HEP programmes make explicit references to disciplinary fields, a connection that is very weak in most VET programmes (Nylund et al., 2017, p. 800).

Vocational prejudice means the traditional prejudgements some people have when they prefer the academic route over the vocational route while enrolling in a particular programme, depending on the demand and attractiveness of academics in society rather than preferring their own interest. The vocational route is considered inferior to the academic one, attracting disproportionately high numbers of low-income students who may be excluded from general/academic education and often come from areas of multiple disadvantages (Lewis, 1994; Pring et al., 2009; Cabinet Office, 2011; Crawford et al., 2011, as cited in Chankseliani, James Relly, &Laczik, 2016, p. 582; Atkins & Flint, 2015, as cited in Jambo & Pilz, 2018, p. 6).

The above mentioned key areas and topics are important for research because these are the basic roots behind the stigma that is being explored in this research. The stigma pertains when social distinction and judgment is made. The stigma pertains when a person is being judged on the basis of his or her educational path. The public-stigma becomes internalized when people have negative experiences from their closed ones and others regarding their vocational programme. Thus, these terms are paramount as stigma is experienced when “individuals possess (or are believed to possess) some attribute, or
characteristic, that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context” (Crocker et al., 1998, as cited in Wood, Byrne, & Morrison, 2017, p. 546).

**Research Rationale, Limitations and Contributions**

This research has explored the vocational prejudice, the academic-vocational divide and the social stigma attached to it. Vocational education is often considered as secondary choice during the transition time from high school to university studies. There are evidences of prejudgements based on educational path, socio-economic background and opportunities given to a person who is not from academic background, higher social class and status. However, there is no specific research that shows how attached stigma affects people who are pursuing vocational field. This research explores the influence of stigma (if it exists) on vocational students at Vancouver Island University (VIU). The present study used a semi-structured interview with closed-ended questions, and open-ended questions.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. In qualitative research, structured and semi-structured interviews are often best conducted toward the end of a study, as they tend to shape responses to the researcher’s perceptions of how things are. They are most useful for obtaining information to test a specific hypothesis that the researcher has in mind (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015, p. 449). The results might bring awareness among educational leaders to address stigma if exist among vocational students while enrolling in vocational programmes and as a consequence of low parity of esteem of VET sector. However, there are limitations to this research as well. The stigma might not exist at individual basis and participants might be proud to be a vocational student in their particular trade field. This means stigma may not exist at individual level but might exist at community level. This challenges and changes the topic being explored in this research. In addition, the research strengthens one’s awareness regarding vocational prejudice and initiatives taken so far to overcome it.
Chapter Summary

This Chapter presents the research question and hypothesis being explored in whole research. The purpose of the study describes the importance of conducting this research and what is the basic background that strengthens this research. The descriptive explanation of literature is in Chapter 2, which includes three different themes: Overcoming vocational prejudice, the vocational-academic divide and the role of personal, public and self-stigma. Chapter 3 describes the method being used to conduct this research and why this particular method was significant for this qualitative research. Chapter 4 include descriptions of students interviewed to accomplish this research, how data is being analysed, and what are the results and findings. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the detailed descriptions of the findings in co-relation with major themes and future recommendation for further studies.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This course uses scientific reasoning like problem solving. It uses more abstract reasoning because there are so many things about cars you try to diagnose. It is less about physical construction of cars but about heavy lifting and stuff like that in automotive. - (response of Participant #16)

Introduction

This Chapter reviews the evidence through previous researches by scholars and psychologists that show how the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector was always dominated by academic sector. These previous studies discussed in this Chapter bring awareness regarding time-to-time initiatives taken by government as well as educational leaders to address this inequity. The three themes related to the current study are: (a) Overcoming vocational prejudice, (b) the vocational-academic divide, and (c) the role of personal, self and public stigmas. The first theme examines researches connected to historical and traditional prejudgements regarding VET sector and what is being done so far to overcome these prejudgements. The second theme reviews researches about division between vocational and academic sector and distinctions made on the basis of which educational background a person have pursued. Finally, the third theme listed above examines researches about the consequences of these judgements and divisions over a vocational student when it is being stigmatised within a person and outside in society where person with academic background is recognised as from higher socio-economic background whereas a person with vocational background regarded as from low-status and poor background. The literature review of all three themes is as follows.

Section - 1: Overcoming Vocational Prejudice
Vocational Education and Training (VET) covers a broad set of purposes, levels, settings and outcomes for young people and adults through different forms of formal and non-formal continuing education and training. Increasingly, it is set, at least theoretically, within a lifelong and life-wide learning perspective and seeks to include a greater use of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning (Gordon, 2015, p. 442). However, there exists a preconception that VET sector is mostly for people who are from low socioeconomic background. The vocational route is considered inferior to the academic one, attracting disproportionately high numbers of low-income students who may be excluded from general/academic education and often come from areas of multiple disadvantages (Lewis, 1994; Pring et al., 2009; Cabinet Office, 2011; Crawford et al., 2011, as cited in Chankeseliani, James Relly, & Laczk, 2016, p. 582; Atkins & Flint, 2015, as cited in Jambo & Pilz, 2018, p. 6).

Cross-Cultural Study

Cross-cultural study is done to monitor if stigmas only exist in Canada or in other countries or different societies as well. It was important to show a general point of view that even in 21st century where we talk about open mindedness, equality, and globalization etc. this mindset of vocational prejudice still exist among masses. The following literature reviews how VET is perceived in different cultures.

Arab Society—Second rate image of VET.VET has tended to fare poorly in the Arab world since its introduction by European agencies in the 1830s despite an initial expectation that VET would enable those societies to close the technology gap with Europe (World Bank 2002; Akkari 2004). Owing to its being an alternative to mainstream “academic” education, VET everywhere is inherently susceptible to being poorly valued (Stevenson, 2005). However, this second-rate image is particularly problematical in Arab society, where since time immemorial manual work has been viewed with disdain. VET is always perceived
as the domain of the lowest social classes and of slaves. Because of this perception, VET accordingly tends to be marginalised as a low-status track for poor academic achievers (Al Heeti&Brock, 1997; Herrera, 2003; Oketch, 2007; as cited in Vlaardingerbroek, & Hachem El-Masri, 2008, p. 20). Edge (2010) argued that, “vocational and practical education should be valued just as highly as academic choices” (as cited in Fisher & Simmons, 2012, p. 45).

**United Kingdom – World Skill Competition.** To improve the attractiveness and parity of the esteem of VET, Chankseliani, Relly, and Laczik (2016) articulated the main problem under the question that, How can skills competitions improve the attractiveness of vocational education and training in the UK? In their research, participants were recruited according to following process for World Skill Competition (WSC). For skills competitions, the potential competitors undergo a selection process that begins with regional and national skill competitions held throughout the UK. The candidates for these UK-based competitions may be further education (FE) college students or apprentices or employees in enterprises. Competitors are also identified through the National Apprenticeship Awards, Awarding Bodies, City & Guilds Awards of Excellence, Sector and Industry Awards and through Sector Skills Councils. Selected young people attend a residential induction programme over four days in the first instance. If candidates wish to be considered for the squad, they attend three to four training events held over the following months. The last of these events involves the candidates receiving two weeks’ training followed by a test project from a previous WSC. Based on their performance, candidates advance from the shortlist to the UK squad. Squad members participate in a training programme over approximately six months and then compete for selection into Team UK. Team selection is a four-day competition replicating the conditions of a WSC and is called The Skills Show. A panel of judges in each skill sector is drawn from industry and VET providers. The judges’ decisions are independently moderated
before being confirmed. After team selection the competitors continue with intensive training to build their skills to world-class standards (Chankseliani et al., 2016, p.584).

The World Skill Competition (WSC) mainly focused on various aspects of developing vocational excellence and did not connect it to the potential impact of such competitions on improving the status of VET (Chankseliani, Relly, & Laczik, 2016, p.586). In addition, VET is identified as the low-skilled manual work with little or no progression opportunities (Rutter, 2013). It is the intent of Chankseliani et al. (2016) to try to move away from this stereotype. There is a need to shift it from policy-focused approach to practice-oriented approach (Chankseliani et al., 2016, p.583). However, there were some limitations in this research. The responses of competitors who excelled in their vocational areas were analysed better than the competitors who pursued vocational courses and did not excel in competition. What problems these unaddressed competitors faced and why they were not able to give their best was completely unclear.

India – Low parity of esteem of VET. Jambo & Pilz (2018) have done research in India in which they conducted interviews with teachers of Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) in New Delhi, Mumbai and Coimbatore. The central concept of their study is the attractiveness of VET. Attractiveness as a concept is complex, and therefore difficult to define. No integrated model for the VET sector exists (Cedefop, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2014, p. 6). Attractiveness lies in the eye of the beholder, as well as in the factors that have an impact on it. Those factors might include its benefit to the labour market, level of quality and respected qualifications (Berger & Pilz, 2010; Cedefop, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2014, as cited in Jambo & Pilz, 2018, p.6).

Nowadays, VET is often seen as a second-choice option, meaning that students participating in it are those with lower achievements (Ratnata, 2013, as cited in Jambo & Pilz,
Career opportunities are one of the indicators of parity of esteem (Young & Raffe, 1998). Teachers stated that university graduates have a higher reputation within society due to their education and therefore higher salaries afterwards. This reflects traditional views that VET has a lower standing within societies and that VET graduates earn less money afterwards (Pilz & Wilmshöfer, 2015, as cited in Jambo & Pilz, 2018, p.9).

In contrast to the prominent position enjoyed by general education, vocational education is of only minor importance and is seen as marginal or even inferior. Participants in vocational training courses are stigmatised and often considered as educational losers. The reasons for the low standing of Indian vocational training courses in society and in the labour market can be traced to several socio-cultural and historical factors. The widespread assumption prevalent in Asia in general is that only the highest educational degrees contribute to an elevated social standing in society and provide the highest return on investment in education. The reason for this can be found in the caste system, which traditionally assigns physical and dirty work to the lower castes (Singh, 2001). In this respect, the tendency towards the increase in academisation through cultural and colonial influences, together with factors relating to religious and social underpinnings, has led to the deep-rooted image problems of vocational education (as cited in Jambo & Pilz, 2018, p.15).

Vocational education therefore represents a dead end, since a connection or linkage of vocational and general education does not exist in India. The ability to change from vocational education courses to general education courses later is not possible. All these historical and socio-cultural factors are working against attempts to upgrade VET processes in India and enhance its attractiveness (Jambo & Pilz, 2018, p.16).

**European Union/Members - Multilevel partnership approaches.** To overcome vocational prejudice, another study was carried out by Galvin Arribas (2016). He has proposed that the most attractive and innovative VET systems in the EU and worldwide are
based on the development of effective multilevel partnership approaches with a strong role of industrial actors in policy making. In the article, the example of VET dual systems (e.g. Germany, Switzerland, and Austria) supports the multilevel partnership firmly. Such inspiring VET reforms can boost the performance of VET, could help to strengthen mutual trust and ownership in order to improve the efficiency and accountability of VET policies and systems (Galvin Arribas, 2016, p. 497).

At the horizontal level of the European Commission and member states, interconnected practices facilitate the interactions and interdependency of multiple actors in solving complex problems. As a result, vocational education actors could perceive that structuring cooperation, sharing proper roles, practising fluid dialogue and running negotiation processes, rather than experiments in the context of systematic isolation are all assets for building joint effective responses to the complex challenges that VET systems are facing regarding their social, economic and labour market functions (OECD, 2016, as cited in Galvin Arribas, 2016, p.498). In this respect, the partnerships could be arranged locally in order to embed them in the overall framework set out in national covenants between VET stakeholders. Partnerships at local level are supposed to ensure that VET provision best fits the local needs. To govern such partnership that should be approachable locally according to local demands for VET, the distribution and balance of powers is required. This means firstly acknowledging that the centralised approaches and authoritative modes are not the best way to do business. Then, a multilevel perspective may be tested as a potentially effective way for the VET system to obtain the status it deserves within the education sector, society and economy (as a national interest affair). Thus, the key issue to modernise and make VET more relevant, attractive and responsive to the labour market and to improve prospects for both youth and women in the region is therefore to shift from a supply- to a demand-driven vocational skills approach (as cited in Manuel Galvin Arribas, 2016, p.499).
Central and eastern European countries - Modernisation of VET. Another initiative for VET reform was held in Central and Eastern European Countries. By the mid-1990s, a first series of reforms had taken place in the Central and Eastern European countries, documented through PHARE programme reports, evaluations for donors, country reviews (such as the OECD review of the Czech Republic in 1986), academic articles, etc. As Kalous and Grootings (1997, as cited in Gordon, 2015, p. 449) noted in their 1997 article in European Journal of Education (EJE) on the Czech Republic, the transition had created far-reaching changes, for example new curricula, but had also produced its own problems as unintended consequences. They included increased costs of educational provision, less transparency and quality, delayed restructuring of apprentice schools, budget problems, teachers’ salaries, recruitment and training, etc.

Grootings (1991, as cited in Gordon, 2015, p. 447) analysed a series of simultaneous problems facing VET systems: Survival (given the deficiencies in the systems following the collapse of traditional decision-making and financing mechanisms), an urgent need for modernisation of VET contents and delivery systems; the transformation of the system to be able to adapt to specific human resource problems of the transition period; and laying the foundations for a system that can cope with the future problems in a more or less stabilised economy which seeks closer integration in the European community.

Two years further into reforms, writing about Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics, Grootings (1993, as cited in Gordon, 2015, p. 448) summarised the major problems during the transition period rooted in a non-adaptation of structures to the social and economic environment since the 1960s, and, more recently, caused by underfunding of VET in these countries. This meant that modernisation of contents, facilities, methods, etc. had not taken place. Teachers were held in low esteem and badly paid; the administration and quality control were indecisive. Adult education was part of the formal school system and
labour market training was unavailable. Hence, there were “conceptual, political, financial and organisational problems to be solved simultaneously,” though choices were influenced by national specificities.

In the first decade of 21st century, along with the other subsystems of education, VET is increasingly seen in a continuum of learning opportunities and provisions that can be accessed in different ways at different stages in life. From a labour market perspective, it is also increasingly integrated in a skills policy approach. One solution was the reform of the European Social Fund (ESF) in 1994 when it became possible to use these funds for measures targeting the low-skilled, young unemployed, long term unemployed, etc. (Davies, 2003). The need to tackle social exclusion was also included in the 1995 Commission White Paper on Teaching and Learning (Davies, 2003, as cited in Gordon, 2015, p.451). The study highlighted evidence that VET contributed to preventing and tackling social exclusion. In an article by two of the researchers who authored this study, Leney and Green (as cited in Gordon, 2015, p.452), expectations for VET echo earlier texts: VET is commonly expected to contribute to positive economic, labour market, social and individual outcomes in the drive to achieve a high-skills economy and learning societies in Europe.

The EU’s Lisbon Strategy launched in March 2000 when the heads of government committed their countries to a new strategic goal: “To create the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” with a target date of 2010. A work programme to monitor progress in education and training was adopted in 2002, Education and Training 2010 (E&T, 2010), with three key objectives: Improving the quality and effectiveness of education and the measurement of progress through agreed instruments, facilitating the access of all to education and training systems and opening-up education and training systems to the wider world (as cited in Gordon, 2015, p.452).
By mid-term in 2005, the capacity of the EU to reach its goal was being widely questioned. The difficulties that were being faced, were very similar to those in the Member States: Coordination and pathways between formal, non-formal and informal learning; slow progress in the recognition of prior learning; issues of coordination between ministries, especially for education and employment; involvement of social partners; the need to develop national qualification systems; and a need for comprehensive policy frameworks rather than piecemeal reforms (Gordon, 2015, p. 453). Since then five declarations (Copenhagen Declaration in 2002, Maastricht Communiqué in 2004, Helsinki Communiqué in 2006, Bordeaux Communiqué in 2008, and Bruges Communiqué in 2010) covered a set of priorities that was updated every two years:

- Improving the image, status, attractiveness and quality of VET;
- Improving the relevance and quality of VET in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders;
- Creating better links between VET and the labour market, adapting to labour market evolutions and understand emerging sectors and skills;
- Developing tools for the mutual recognition and validation of competences and qualifications;
- Improving quality assurance in VET;
- Applying common instruments and references in reforming and developing VET systems and practices;
- VET should be inclusive. Developing VET systems to cater for the needs of disadvantaged people and groups and empower people to adapt to and manage change by enabling them to acquire key competences (Gordon, 2015, p. 454).

Educational institutions in the UK education system. Silver and Brennan (1988, p. 18) summarised the various cultural stigmas and dichotomies that have cross-penetrated the
English education system. The strongest antipathies to the vocational were found within the
great English universities which have for centuries held sway over the country’s intellectual
climate. In contrast, higher education in the USA embraced technocratic knowledge (Manicas
1993). Arguably, the applied and instrumental nature of vocational education runs contrary to
the ethics and liberal traditions of the English university as viewed by John Stuart Mill,
Newman or, more recently, Oakeshott (Williams, 1989). Rather than providing students with
the “gift of an interval” in an “exalted place apart” where ideas may be pursued without
regard to their utility, a vocational curriculum invites learners to apply themselves to the
acquisition of skills which, at least within capitalist economies, will “oil the wheels” of
commerce. Whilst, in theory, vocationally qualified students acquire high levels of
employability and earning potential, in the UK, this has generally not been the case,
especially in relation to those undertaking their studies in the further education (FE) sector.
UK employers, and particularly those offering more prestigious and well-paid forms of work,
have traditionally preferred to recruit graduates with a broad and traditional academic
education prizing especially those with qualifications from ‘elite’ universities (Hyland
&Winch, 2007, as cited in Fisher & Simmons, 2012, p.34). This shift away from the practical
and the technical towards the academic and the general is closely associated with the desire
for increased status and prestige that typifies UK education (Ainley & Bailey 1997, as cited
in Fisher & Simmons, 2012, p.36).

There has also been a rhetorical commitment within the new vocationalism to the
notion of equality of opportunity. A further similarity is that radical educators, seeking to
dissolve established hierarchies of labour, stress the unity of mental and manual labour,
something that new vocationalists also espoused in the light of modes of production
dominated by information technologies (Fisher & Simmons, 2012, p. 40).
The current government’s proposals for explicitly vocational learning in FE are less well formed but appear to be dominated by conservative views centred on increasing the number of apprenticeships and making vocational education more “practical” and relevant to the workplace. Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, commissioned Professor Alison Wolf of King’s College, London to carry out a review of vocational education. The Wolf Review of Vocational Education (Wolf, 2011) strongly underlined this argument, suggesting that between “a quarter and a third of the post-16 cohort” are following low level vocational provision which has “little or no labour market value” (as cited in Fisher & Simmons, 2012, p.43). In addition, vocational learning is still viewed as a firmly second-class option in comparison to academic education. This is illustrated by Prime Minister Cameron’s views on University Technical Colleges (UTCs), which mix hyperbole with a discourse of deficit:

“The next great poverty-busting structural change we need the expansion of University Technical Schools offering first-class technical skills to those turned off by purely academic study” (Cameron, 2010, as cited in Fisher & Simmons, 2012, p.46).

This statement clearly depict that vocational education is regarded as a path of opportunities for those who have poor academic background. It lower down the status of VET more because if the leaders of a country think this way then bringing change at institutional level will not affect the system in which this mindset is pervaded that VET is for less-academic people.

**Role of Media and Technology in UK World Skill Competition**

The motive of Chankseliani et al.’s research was not accomplished that was to increase the attractiveness and parity of esteem of VET using social media and other technologies. Chankseliani et al. (2016) considered the fault of media focus on building
academic courses status more than on VET, but did not suggest any solution to promote VET on large-scale. Following are some responses of competitors come forward through media. “Some people go to university because they think, they have to,” said one competitor who had tried to explain through his media appearances that the “academic route isn’t the only route.” He thought he had proved that through an apprenticeship route “you can still do well; you don’t have to go to university to do well” (Chankseliani et al., 2016, p. 594). The overwhelming majority of the respondents talked about the lack of publicity for the WSC, even more so in 2011 when it was held in London, where significantly more benefits could have been reaped from a better publicity campaign: “It wasn’t very well profiled in any way. The WorldSkills is an incredible competition, equivalent to the Olympics. A massive event up in London, both ExCels taken and there wasn’t anyone really media-wise, they weren’t really interested” said one of the employer. Some interviewees hypothesised that the low level of interest from mass media could have been explained by the eagerness of general audience to hear negative stories than positive ones: “And it’s always an uphill struggle to get the good publicity out” said one of the team member. Another reason for the low level of media attention was the perceived low status of vocational education as opposed to academic education: “WorldSkills London wasn’t promoted as high as it could have been. Maybe that’s because VET is pushed down the ladder, as opposed to the academic skills, but now it’s the time that skills need to be pushed harder.” (Chankseliani et al., 2016, p. 596).

**Section – 2: The Vocational-Academic Divide**

**Family history.** Vanhalakka-Ruoho, Koski, Silvonen, and Tamminen (2016) expressed the mindset behind choosing an academic and vocational education path. Even today, the choice between vocational and general upper secondary education is essentially a choice between taking a “hand- or head-oriented” educational pathway (Vanhalakka-Ruoho et al., 2016, p. 118). Researchers have observed that adolescents from families with high
educational statuses are exposed to more opportunities and are given more support than their lower status peers (Vanhalakka-Ruoho et al., 2016, p. 126).

**Educational institutions’ favouritism in selection.** Nori (2011) found that university selection processes favour children with the most educated parents from the highest social statuses. The socioeconomic status (including educational status (ES)) and social class of a family are the main structural factors which influence the career construction of children (Soresi et al., 2014; Whiston & Keller, 2004, as cited in Vanhalakka-Ruoho et al., 2016, p. 118).

One can conclude following results from this study: In the academic families, choosing general upper secondary school was considered a self-evident choice that was assumed to be internalised during childhood. If it was not the case, then parents thought they had to intervene. When the transition was from a vocational family to the general upper secondary school, the parents stressed that when the choice of career was not yet known; general upper secondary school was a good option (Vanhalakka-Ruoho et al., 2016, p. 123). The parents of adolescents who chose the vocational route believed that their children would be employed. For adolescents from vocational families who moved on to general upper secondary school, the labour market was seen more as a market of individual opportunities (Vanhalakka-Ruoho et al., 2016, p. 125).

Families with minimal education were missing from the sample, and working class families were underrepresented. Alternative transitional pathways, from academic families to vocational education, were also absent in the design of the study (Vanhalakka-Ruoho et al., 2016, p. 125). Thinking critically, 70% of students from academic and vocational families choose academic path as they were unclear about their vocation and students from vocational skills choose vocational path with the hope that they will get employed or as per parents’
choice. Parents should be included to make a choice on the basis of interests, personalities and needs of young students instead of influencing their choice.

**Educational institutions’ division of VET and HEP programmes.** Other research supporting vocational-academic divide was done by Nylund, Rosvall, and Ledman (2017), the Swedish case. They have described the reform of education system on the basis of the purposes of education and class dimension. This reform includes two types of programmes – Vocational Educational Training (VET) Programmes and Higher Educational Preparatory (HEP) Programmes. The study uses a comparative case study design in which researchers have conducted a two-stage qualitative analysis on the national curriculum regulating Swedish upper secondary education (Nylund et al., 2017, p. 791).

Students in VET programmes are trained to “do” and to “adapt”, while the students in HEP programmes are trained to “think” and to “imagine possibilities” (Nylund et al., 2017, p. 788). In HEP programmes, the focus is on more abstract and general relationships: [Society-individual], [man-nature], [thought-action], [theory-practice]. By contrast, VET programmes essentially focus on relationships in the workplace: [Worker-customer], [colleague-colleague], [worker-work place] (Nylund et al., 2017, p. 797). VET programmes essentially follow and adapt to laws that are underlined, while HEP programmes emphasise understanding the law’s controlling effect and what conditions might be established in different contexts (p. 799). Also, the diversity of perspectives is more for HEP programmes while perspective wealth is missing in VET programmes (p. 804). Thus, the discourse in HEP programmes is of a more vertical character and rewards more general skills, while the dominant discourse in VET programmes is more horizontal and rewards more contextual skills (p. 796). That is why HEP programmes make explicit references to disciplinary fields, a connection that is very weak in most VET programmes (p. 800).
Moreover, this reform includes foundational subjects in both types of programmes which classify and frame the knowledge to be covered in various subjects. The following table shows subjects fall into various types.

Table 2.1
Programme-specific and Foundation Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme-specific subjects</th>
<th>Higher Education (HEP) Programmes</th>
<th>Vocational (VET) Programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Management</td>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>Natural Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Economics</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Physics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Modern Languages</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Languages</td>
<td>Modern Languages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Foundation Subjects         |                                 |                            |
|-----------------------------|                                 |                            |
| Swedish 300 hours           | Swedish 100 hours               |                            |
| Natural Science 100 hours   | Natural Science 50 hours        |                            |
| Social Science 100 hours    | Social Science 50 hours         |                            |
| History 100-200 hours       | History 50 hours                |                            |

(Adapted from Nylund et al., 2017, p. 794)

VET programmes give 600 hours to foundation subjects, whereas HEP programmes give 1100–1250 hours, depending on the specific programme. This quantitative difference is the main reason that VET programmes do not give students access to higher education (Nylund et al., 2017, p. 802). This approach to education had an effect on vocational education itself. Surveying the history of vocational education, Hayward and Benson (1993, as cited in Rose, 2012) concluded, “Vocational teachers emphasized job-specific skills to the almost complete exclusion of theoretical content. One result was that the intellectual development of vocational students tends to be limited at a relatively early age” (p. 710). So not only is the intellectual ability of the student diminished, but the intellectual content of work is as well. One key difference is that foundation courses in VET programmes are
significantly shorter. Therefore, although the VET and HEP syllabuses for foundation courses are similar up to a point, the VET courses inevitably cover significantly fewer areas of content (Nylund et. al., 2017, p. 802).

Thinking critically, until the disciplinary connection is absent in VET and academic programmes, vocational education cannot gain the social status and educational value as much as academic education. That is why while thinking about VET programmes, parents as well as students think of task or hand-oriented courses. At the time of transition from high school studies to university studies, one give more importance to upper secondary education because either he or she is not sure about vocation they are interested in or if the acceptance of academic courses is more in society.

**Cross-Cultural Study**

Cross-cultural study is done to know the effect of academic-vocational divide in different cultures. The programmes in both educational paths are divided and organised by keeping them apart physically and curriculum wise. Instead of developing integrated curriculum, initiatives are taken to categorize academic and vocational programmes into different institutions. The follow literature provides detailed information of this division.

**Finland, Iceland and Sweden – Core division between academic and vocational programmes.** A related research was conducted by Nylund et al. (2018) in three Nordic countries - Finland, Iceland and Sweden. In all three countries there is a core division between what we here call “academic programmes,” which prepare students for higher education at university level, and “vocational programmes,” which focus on providing training for specific trades or occupations (Nylund et. al., 2018, p. 99). Students whose parents do not have an academic education are dominant in vocational programmes, while students whose parents have an academic education are dominant in academic programmes.
A tight cluster of culturally transmitted assumptions about cognition, knowledge, academic achievement, and social class constricts our educational imagination. And the way subject areas and disciplines are organized in school contributes to the problem (Rose, 2012, p. 11). In Iceland, information on social class is “hidden,” both in research and in other public documents. Nevertheless, the number of applications for upper-secondary schools shows that class matters. Almost all of the upper-secondary grammar schools select their students based on academic grades (VerzlunarskóliÍslands, 2016). According to Finnish and Swedish studies, students in introductory programmes more often come from homes with more restricted academic backgrounds (Dovemark, 2011; Dovemark & Beach, 2016; Dovemark & Johansson, 2015; Loeb & Wass, 2015; Niemi&Kurki, 2014). In Finland, the major proportion of students regarded as having special educational needs enter vocational programmes rather than academic programmes (Kirjavainen, Pulkkinen, & Jahnukainen, 2016; Niemi & Mietola, 2017) (as cited in Nylund et al., 2018, p. 101).

In terms of classification, the division between vocational and academic programmes is one of the principal starting points in this contemporary policy trend, inter alia expressed through the “class prejudice,” conspicuous in much contemporary policy, in which students attending vocational programmes are viewed as being uninterested in “theory,” civic education or general subjects, and mainly interested in “practice” or workplace learning (Beach, Lundahl, & Öhrn, 2011; Niemi & Rosvall, 2013; Nylund, 2013; Rosvall, 2015) (Nylund et. al., 2018, p. 102; Brockmann, & Laurie, 2016, p. 230). These divisions are powerfully reinforced when students join an institution. The academic-vocational divide has resulted in separate departments, separate faculty, separate budgets, separate turf and power dynamics. Now egos and pay-checks enter the mix. These multiple separations lead to all
sorts of political tensions and self-protective behaviours that work against curricular integration (Rose, 2012, p. 11).

In Sweden the latest upper-secondary reform in 2011 substantially strengthened the division between academic and vocational programmes. In the accompanying curriculum (Lgy11), the vocational programmes were steered towards “workplace relevance” with less time dedicated to general subjects (Nylund, 2013; Rehn & Eliasson, 2015), while the academic programmes were organised according to a more classical academic/disciplinary discourse and with about twice as much curricular space dedicated to general subjects (Nylund et al., 2017). Finnish vocational education is currently going through a new reform that further emphasises on-the-job training and increases the options for earning a diploma; the reform also makes it possible to attain individual sub-diploma goals by offering opportunities to earn competence points not only by studying at school but also in places of work (Nylund & Virolainen, 2017). It is likely that the reform will widen the gap between vocational and academic programmes, at least in terms of programme content and pedagogical practices. In Iceland a similar competency-based model was implemented in 2008. The reform introduced six fundamental “pillars” into the curricula (literacy, sustainability, democracy and human rights, equality, health and well-being, and creativity), which were to be integrated into all programmes, along with three mandatory subjects (the Icelandic language, Mathematics and English). The reform also introduced decentralised curriculum development, in that schools now write their own curricula based on the national curriculum guide (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2012; Ragnarsdottir & Johannesson, 2014, as cited in Nylund et al., 2018, p. 103).

The consequences of this weaker framing of the vocational curriculum have not yet been investigated, but it is likely that the interpretation of what counts as important
knowledge will be different, depending on whether the curriculum is written for a vocational or an academic programme.

These studies thus suggest that the organisation of knowledge in vocational programmes ignores the potential vertical elements. This, in turn, implies that students in the different tracks (vocational vs. academic) are being prepared for very different societal positions as citizens and as employees (IsopahkalaBouret, 2013; Nylund, 2012; Nylund et al., 2017). Furthermore, it also implies an enhanced uneven social distribution of knowledge (Bernstein, 2000, as cited in Nylund et al., 2018, p. 103). Students in vocational programmes in Iceland and Sweden are not automatically eligible to enter institutions of higher education, and few students from Finnish vocational programmes later enrol in research universities (Lundahl et al., 2010; Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, n.d.; University of Iceland, 2016, as cited in Nylund et al., 2018, p. 104). This is manifested because of reduction of vertical knowledge and general contextualisation.

In Iceland a strong division between academic and vocational programmes has been the norm since the founding of upper-secondary comprehensive schools (Act on comprehensive schools No. 14/1973). These programmes also have different exit points, with vocational programmes firmly directed towards employment and academic programmes directed towards further education, according to the national curricula (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2012, as cited in Nylund et al., 2018, p. 105). Another manifestation of the academic-vocational divide in the three countries is the involvement of external actors who steer the vocational and academic programmes. In brief, a trend in the three countries, which combines the temporary demands of employers with the design of vocational programmes, i.e. a strongly demand-driven curriculum, can be identified (Nylund, 2013, as cited in Nylund et al., 2018, p. 106).
In the three countries there is also emphasis on each student’s individual study path and the opportunities to influence the choice of path, but the justification for individualisation is based on labour-market demands. Because of the focus on specific task-related skills and knowledge, vocational students are not being offered access to theoretical and disciplinary knowledge; rather contemporary trends in all three countries aim mainly at adjusting learning for the preconditions of the workplace and the labour markets. In short, contemporary policy and curriculum trends in all three countries are influenced by neo-liberal ideas and this trend seems to be widening the academic-vocational divide. A clearer division is the separation of vocational programmes from academic programmes, and the classification and framing that puts the principle of “market relevance” at the core of what counts as valued knowledge in vocational programmes. These principles of classification and framing affect the distribution of knowledge and students’ transitions in ways that further strengthen the academic-vocational divide. It appears that vocational and academic programmes are kept physically separate by being located on different floors, in different buildings or in different parts of the city (Dovemark & Holm, 2017, as cited in Nylund et al., 2018, p. 106).

In addition, it has been observed that teacher-led classes in VET programmes are more scarce than in academic education (Hjelmer, Lappalainen, & Rosvall, 2010; Hjelmer & Rosvall, 2017). Despite some organisational integration of academic and vocational programmes in Sweden, the programmes have been treated as separate; low expectations of vocational students, seen in Finland with a different organisation, appeared to persist, despite having both programme types under the same roof (Hjelmer et al., 2014; Rosvall, Hjelmer, & Lappalainen, 2016). Finnish studies indicate that teachers, who are responsible for general subjects, such as Mathematics and the Finnish language, have a different status in vocational institutions. In vocational education, teachers of general subjects are sometimes considered secondary, and they feel pressure to adapt their teaching to support the vocational curriculum.
However, in the results of a cross-cultural ethnographic study involving Finland and Sweden, there are examples of cooperation between different subject teachers. The study shows that, in Finnish vocational programmes, general subject teachers seemed to co-operate both with each other and with special education teachers by instituting pedagogical practices in which vocational students are given support during core subject classes without having to leave the classroom for a separate study room (Niemi & Rosvall, 2013, as cited in Nylund et al., 2018, p. 107).

Furthermore, a few studies in Sweden have shown that more experienced teachers in general subjects (for example, Swedish, English, Mathematics) in schools housing both programme types prefer to teach in academic programmes, as these are considered more attractive than vocational ones. The teachers argued that the students in academic programmes were more interested in their subjects and, as a result, more advanced courses in the subjects could be delivered.

According to school leaders in Iceland, teachers tend to protect their own subjects, but this differs according to subject, where academic subject teachers were seen to be more conservative compared to vocational subject teachers. Even though there have been projects in all three countries to integrate vocational and academic education and thus reduce the inequalities of social backgrounds, a strong division between vocational and academic programmes persist. For example, in both the Swedish and Icelandic cases, simply “placing” vocational and academic programmes in the same schools did not eliminate problems of different traditions and hierarchies of programme types and subjects. Research in Sweden shows that vocational knowledge appears to be devalued by teachers in general subjects. Yet, when teachers in general subjects are placed in vocational education settings, as in Finland, their knowledge appears to be devalued. Hierarchies in both cases work against integrating the two programmes. Eiriksdottir and Rosvall (2017) found that teachers of vocational
subjects in Iceland and Sweden expressed concern that vocational programmes were sometimes portrayed as “easy” and, as a result, “less-academically-competent” students were directed towards those programmes. Yet many of the vocational subjects include difficult concepts, advanced mathematics and demanding reasoning. Parents also tend to reinforce the lower status of vocational programmes in Iceland, according to interviews with school leaders (Ragnarsdóttir, in press), who stressed that some parents direct their children to academic programmes instead of vocational programmes and prefer popular upper-secondary grammar schools with a long history and academic traditions instead of comprehensive schools. Low expectations towards vocational students have become akin to a self-fulfilling prophesy, as vocational students are provided with less advanced textbooks in mathematics than academic students and given less advanced tasks in preparation for national tests in Swedish or mathematics (Hjelmer & Rosvall, 2017; Norlund, 2011; Rosvall et al., 2016). In Sweden there is quite an extensive body of research pointing to pedagogical practices, teaching or teachers that devalue the skills and knowledge of vocational students, often in comparison with academic students (AnderssonVarga, 2014; Björk-Åman, 2013; Johansson, 2009; Korp, 2012; Ledman, 2015a; Norlund, 2011, as cited in Nylund et al., 2018, p. 108).

A study by Dovemark and Holm (2017) found that increased competition is accentuated in Sweden’s local education markets. Some of these pathways are associated with academic programmes and “high ability” students, while others are associated with vocational programmes and “low ability” students (Dovemark & Holm, 2017). Jonsson and Beach (2013, as cited in Nylund et al., 2018, p. 109) also highlight the different statuses between academic and vocational students in Sweden. The authors identified the low status of vocational programmes through comments made about vocational students by those in academic programmes; the authors found that phrases such as “dull, slow and stupid” were used to describe vocational students, while students in academic programmes were described
as “fast, sharp and intelligent.” Problems of reproduction of class and gender are usually associated with countries that divide students early within their educational systems, such as Germany (Protsch & Solga, 2016), the UK (Avis, 2016), and the US (Allmendinger, 1989) (as cited in Nylund et al., 2018, p. 111).

One conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the general principle of integration between vocational and academic programmes has been replaced by a principle of separation, given contemporary trends. This separation, in turn, can be traced to the influence of “market relevance” as a dominating principle for the steering of vocational content. This tendency reflects a curriculum discourse that is also noticeable in many other countries, including Australia (Wheelahan, 2010), Germany, and the UK (Brockmann, 2012). In this approach, market principles steer vocational education, which focuses on (often relatively low-skilled) work-based learning (Canning, 1998; Wheelahan, 2015). This means that the trend is strengthening the academic-vocational divide (Nylund et al., 2017), and thus the social class divide, through differentiated entry and exit points, access to different types of knowledge and unequal access to higher education. In short, our results suggest that contemporary trends represent greater exclusion of vocational students from “society’s conversation” about itself (as cited in Nylund et al., 2018, p. 112).

USA – Abstract minded versus manually minded. Looking back over our history, labour journalist John Hoerr (1988, as cited in Rose, 2012, p. 10) observed, “Since the early days of industrialization, a peculiar notion has gained ascendancy in the United States that wage workers lacked the competence to handle complex issues and problems that required abstract knowledge and analytical ability” (p. 273). This tendency was evident when post-Revolutionary War mechanics were portrayed in editorials as illiterate and incapable of participating in government, and it was alive and well when an auto industry supervisor told Hoerr that his workers were “a bunch of dummies.” As opposed to college-bound students
(overwhelmingly White and middle to upper class) who were “abstract minded,” working-class and immigrant students were “manually minded.” So there again is the tight chain-link of cognition-education-work-and social class. This set of beliefs and distinctions about knowledge, work, and the social order affected the structure of educational institutions in the United States.

The problem of “parity of esteem” between the vocational and the academic in English education is deeply entrenched and, despite much rhetoric from both educationalists and policy-makers, has never been effectively addressed. Perhaps this is because it is so deeply seated in institutional divisions and peculiarly English cultural attitudes (Brockmann, & Laurie, 2016, p. 230). Indeed, successive governments have firmly resisted ongoing pressure to create a unified system of qualifications that attempt to bridge the academic-vocational divide. A recent notable example is rejection of Tomlinson Report for unified system. New Labour’s (UK Labour Movement, 1997) rejection of the Tomlinson Report’s (DfES 2004, as cited in Fisher & Simmons, 2012, p. 38) recommendation that separate academic and vocational qualifications for young people should be abolished and replaced by the creation of integrated diplomas encompassing both strands of learning. These Conservative-led governments can be seen to have further cemented the divide, for example, through the introduction of university technical colleges in 2010. Placed in polar opposition to the academic route, VET has been conceptualised as a separate and distinct form of learning, with apprenticeship as a distinct pathway for “practical learners” (Avis 2004, 2009, as cited in Brockmann, & Laurie, 2016, p. 230). Crucially, the academic-vocational discourse is underpinned by assumptions about vocational learners as “non-academic or disaffected” with classroom learning and capable of learning only by doing.

The study suggests that, for those young people who perhaps would want to stay on the shop floor, “the vocational” and how it is conceived is still a constraining category,
especially in terms of the narrowness of activities, and the priority of procedural as opposed to conceptual knowledge (Brockmann, & Laurie, 2016, p. 242). Similar to the findings of previous research (Willis 1977; Archer & Yamashita, 2003), they insisted that academic work was “not for them”, that they were “not good at reading and writing” and “much better at hands-on work.” However, the unfolding stories revealed that rather than being naturally “practical” learners, the young people were constituted as “non-academic” in school environments that privileged the academic. Difficult personal circumstances were another reason for poor school attainment leading to disengagement and the naming of students as “non-academic” (Brockmann & Laurie, 2016, p. 235). Constituted as “non-academic” in school, they constructed “practical” learner identities which allowed them an alternative, but equally powerful, social existence (Brockmann & Laurie, 2016, p. 236). The young people were eager to express an identity which afforded them a sense of purpose that they had been denied at school (p. 241).

**Canada - Characteristics of transition systems.** Canada is a federation in which constitutional responsibility for education rests with the ten provincial and three territorial governments. Consequently, there is no federal ministry of education for institutions of tertiary education, and education is governed by the provinces and territories (Arnold, Wheelahan, Moodie, Beaulieu, & Taylor-Cline, 2018, p. 126). The institutional and policy frameworks, structure of jobs, and formation of skill in Canada’s largest provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec reveal diverse characteristics of transition systems. However, despite internal differentiation in the value of vocational education, variations at the provincial level have not been enough to shift the federal pattern as a whole. Instead, in Canada vocational education generally denotes lower abilities and motivation, and is not always viewed favourably by employers who can choose from college and university trained individuals (Arnold et al., 2018, p. 125).
Iannelli and Raffe (2007, as cited in Arnold et al., 2018, p. 129) suggest that in systems with weak links (liberal market economies) vocational education follows an education logic, whereas in those with strong links (coordinated market economies) it follows an employment logic. In systems with an education logic vocational education is viewed as being of lower status and thus students who struggle academically are pushed into these fields. At the high school level, fewer students enrol in streams and courses that lead to vocational education due to the associated stigma. Employers have little involvement in vocational education/programming and they largely meet students first as they enter the labour market (Arnold et al., 2018, p. 130). The following table presents characteristics associated with different markets based on education logics versus employment logics.

Table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Liberal markets</th>
<th>Coordinated markets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volume of people trained determined by:</td>
<td>Supply/demand</td>
<td>Strategic interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations between enterprises</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main form of skills formation</td>
<td>Formal education</td>
<td>Apprenticeships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of skills formed</td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of skills formed (continued)</td>
<td>General skill</td>
<td>Specific skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education logics</td>
<td></td>
<td>Employment logics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume of enrolment in vocational education</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing of vocational education</td>
<td>Stigmatised</td>
<td>Highly valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of educational sectors</td>
<td>Vocational education lower status</td>
<td>Weaker status hierarchies between vocational and higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers’ recruitment practices</td>
<td>Individuals recruited for jobs with perceptions of greatest potential</td>
<td>Individuals recruited for jobs through networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links between qualifications and work</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Strong and clear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Arnold et al., 2018, p. 129)

In Canada, similar to Australia and the United Kingdom, there are loose links between qualifications and work. Generally, people work in jobs that are not closely associated with
their qualification (Wheelahan et al., 2015, as cited in Arnold et al., 2018, p. 130). For instance, Ontario also has an education logic, as there are weak relations between students’ field of study when pursuing further education and into the labour market, aside from regulated occupations (Wheelahan et al., 2015). While the historical/foundational design of the system consisted of vocational education that prepared students for work, the current system follows an education logic with small apprenticeship opportunities and a number of students looking to progress onto further education. Academic and vocational education are less differentiated, there is stigmatisation associated with college study, there is a presence of institutional hierarchies, and hiring practices tend to be based on perceptions about the greatest potential of applicants (Bosch&Charest,2008; Murray, 2000; Raffe,2008 as cited in Arnold et al., 2018, p. 139).

The curriculum in most Canadian universities for undergraduate degrees follows the North American model of being quite generalist (primarily arts and science based), while the college curriculum is practical, hands-on and vocationally specific. As such, Ontario students moving from college to university tend to encounter “occupational transfer” versus “traditional transfer” (Townsend, Bragg, &Rudd, 2008, as cited in Arnold et al., 2018, p. 137). Townsend, Bragg, and Rudd (2008) defined the difference between the two types of curriculum and arrangements for transfer in the following manner: (1) “Traditional transfer” refers to students who complete a programme outside of the university sector that is articulated and designed with transfer to a university degree in mind, and (2) “occupational transfer” refers to students completing a specialised occupational programme and then seeking transfer to a university degree (career ladder, inverse/upside down, and management ladder).

However, the scant research data on the trajectories of students in VET programs in Ontario tends to show that these programs are relegated to a lower level of education, which
has an effect on the perceptions employers generally have of students in VET (Taylor 2003, as cited in Molgat, Deschenaux & LeBlanc, 2011, p. 509). Young people who enter these programs are often more vulnerable than other young people for reasons that are not strictly limited to academic performance. A great many come from lower socio-economic backgrounds; others may be facing problems pertaining to health, poverty or addiction. Some are juggling school and employment with other transitions linked to couple and family formation. Trajectories and strategies thus appear diverse and support the idea that a more comprehensive approach should be adopted when considering how to promote high school vocational education and ensure the success of students in various programs (Molgat et al., 2011, p. 513).

**Role of media and technology in Quebec and Ontario.** Over the past 25 years, student enrolment in high school vocational programs has been declining, a trend discerned from the ever lower rates of individuals aged 15 to 24 who have earned a high school VET degree. Despite declining rates across Canada, the province of Quebec has maintained an above-average rate of persons with these qualifications and, in fact, the percentages have been creeping up since the mid 1990s. Although attempts at redesigning VET may explain this increase, this province has for many years been airing public information campaigns and, unlike Ontario, can actually show through data that positive results occur in the labour market for completers of VET programs. Despite the increase in participation in vocational training in Quebec, it is important to note that less than 20% of each student cohort enters a VET program. This is still far below the rates observed in some Nordic countries and Germany, where rates can exceed 50% (Caron, 2004, as cited in Molgat et al., 2011, p. 510).

Perhaps stemming from its origins, VET at the secondary level has never actually been perceived in a positive light by students, parents, teachers and the general population. To counter these perceptions and spurred on more recently by imminent risks of labour
shortages in both provinces (Emploi-Québec, 2008; Conference Board of Canada, 2007; as cited in Molgat, Deschenaux, & LeBlanc, 2011, p. 509).

The Ontario and Québec governments have set up media campaigns to make VET pathways more attractive to young people and their parents. The messages conveyed underscore the high returns of VET programs when individuals enter the labour market. Such efforts attempt to entice students by promising them short and specific training programs that will lead to employment.

**Educational institutions’ favouritism in Canada.** There seems to be marginalisation of vocational education in most Canadian provinces, as it is often presumed that students undergoing this educational stream possess lower abilities and are more likely to be unmotivated. As a result, employers favour university-trained students at the expense of technically-trained ones because the educational background of the former group suggests that they possess the greatest potential to succeed in a particular profession (Finnie 2004; Frenette 2014; Iannelli & Raffe, 2007; Walters, 2009, as cited in Arnold et al., 2018, p. 139).

**Section – 3: The Role of Personal, Self and Public Stigmas**

Before going in detail about the types of stigma that are discussed in this research, firstly we need to know the definition of stigma. There is no one particular way to define stigma and even the definitions given by researchers and social psychologists are complex in nature. When stigma is explicitly defined, many authors quote Goffman’s (1963) definition of stigma as an “attribute that is deeply discrediting” and that reduces the bearer “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (as cited in Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 364). Stafford and Scott (1986, p. 80) proposed that stigma “is a characteristic of person that is contrary to a norm of a social unit” where a “norm” is defined as a “shared belief that a person ought to behave in a certain way at a certain time” (p. 81). Crocker et al. (1998, p. 505) indicated that “stigmatized individuals possess (or are believed to possess) some
attribute, or characteristic, that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context.” Jones et al. (1984, as cited in Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 365) stated that stigma can be seen as a relationship between an “attribute and a stereotype” to produce a definition of stigma as a “mark” (attribute) that links a person to undesirable characteristics (stereotypes). According to Oliver (1992, as cited in Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 366), the central thrust of stigma research has been focused on the perceptions of individuals and the consequences of such perceptions for micro-level interaction.

Link and Phelan (2001) chose to define stigma in the convergence of interrelated components. Thus, stigma exists when elements of labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination occur together in a power situation that allows them. This is a definition that they derived, not one that exists in some independent existential way (p. 377). However the term stigma is completely different than the term discrimination. Sayce (1998, as cited in Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 366) stated that the stigma or mark is seen as something in the person rather than a designation or tag that others affix to the person. In this respect the term stigma directs our attention differently than a term like discrimination. In contrast to stigma, discrimination focuses the attention of research on the producers of rejection and exclusion - those who do the discriminating - rather than on the people who are the recipients of these behaviours.

In addition, Link & Phelan (2001) have conceptualized stigma. In their conceptualization, stigma exists when the following interrelated components converge. In the first component, people distinguish and label human differences. In the second, dominant cultural beliefs link labelled persons to undesirable characteristics to negative stereotypes. In the third, labelled persons are placed in distinct categories so as to accomplish some degree of separation of “us” from “them.” In the fourth, labelled persons experience status loss and discrimination that lead to unequal outcomes. Finally, stigmatization is entirely contingent on
access to social, economic, and political power that allows the identification of differentness, the construction of stereotypes, the separation of labelled persons into distinct categories, and the full execution of disapproval, rejection, exclusion, and discrimination (p. 367).

Here one can question that how someone know that he or she is been stigmatized or a victim of stigma. Stigma is experienced when “individuals possess (or are believed to possess) some attribute, or characteristic, that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context” (Crocker et al., 1998, as cited in Wood, Byrne, & Morrison, 2017, p. 546). This stigma is internalized when an individual becomes aware of negative stereotypes and applies them to oneself, often resulting in emotional distress (Corrigan & Watson, 2002, as cited in Wood et al., 2017, p. 546). Dominant cultural beliefs connect the labelled person to undesirable characteristics, and the person is then placed in a distinct category different to us, which allows for emotional distancing and results in status loss (Wood et al., 2017, p. 546). As a result, labelled person experience constricted social networks (Link et al., 1989), lived a compromised quality of life (Rosenfield, 1997), low self-esteem (Wright et al., 2000), depressive symptoms (Link et al., 1997), unemployment and income loss (Link, 1982, 1987, as cited in Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 374).

Furthermore, there are various types of stigma that include experienced stigma, perceived stigma, internalized stigma, public stigma, personal stigma, and self-stigma. Experienced stigma has been defined as “instances of discrimination on the grounds of their perceived unacceptability or inferiority” (Scrambler & Hopkins, 1986). Perceived stigma is the extent to which the stigmatized person believes that others associate them with the negative stereotypes (Link, 1987). Internalized stigma, as defined by Corrigan and Watson (2002, as cited in Wood et al., 2017, p. 547), is the self-application of the negative stereotypes and the consequential emotional distress. The stigma that has an influence through the direct personal reactions of those with whom we interact is termed as personal
stigma. The influence of stigma at the societal level usually referred to as public stigma and when the effects of these stigmas internalized in an individual then it becomes self-stigma (Ludwikowski, Vogel, & Armstrong, 2009, p. 409).

In present research, only three stigmas are explored that include: Personal stigma, public stigma and self-stigma. These three stigma are associated respectively with the vocational prejudice in the following way: When a vocationally-trained person is dominated by society and taken as inferior than a person who is from academic background then public stigma pertains; while having a conversation with friends and family or near dear ones, if a vocationally trained person is not regarded as capable as an academically inclined person then personal stigma pertains; and finally when the person who is a victim of such stigma starts judging itself and getting inferiority complex such as “I am not good enough as others” on the basis of vocational programme that he or she is pursuing then this stigma become internalized which is called self-stigma. So far, these stigmas are only explored for medical problems such as severe mental illness (SMI) issues, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) etc. and career counselling. One can get awareness about the consequences by overseeing the labelled person who has been stigmatised by attaching to the stereotypes at the societal level but specific research that shows evidence about the stigma (if it exists) integrated with vocational education prejudice (as explained in first theme) is under-represented. That is why the researcher of the present study have explored personal stigma, public stigma and self-stigma experiences in accordance with vocational courses. The following is the literature reviewed in severe mental illness (SMI) and career counselling to get an idea about how stigma affects a person’s sense of self.

**Stigma experienced regarding SMI.** By integrating elements of the existing stigma models with Social Mentality Theory (SMT), Watson et al. (2007) reported that when people perceive stigma to be unfair or unwarranted, or they feel disrespected, they will experience
righteous anger and frustration. Shame and depression are recognized as emotional responses to stigma due to a loss of social rank (Gilbert, 2010, as cited in Wood et al., 2017, p. 551). Anger occurs when an individual identifies with the stigmatized group but perceives the stigma to be unjust or unfair (Rüsch et al., 2005, as cited in Wood et al., 2017, p. 552). In addition to overcoming stigma, qualitative research has identified that having idiosyncratic goals is important to achieve despite stigma, for example gaining employment, accessing education and developing professional relationships (Andreasen et al., 2003; Wood et al., 2016b). Supportive relationships and secure attachments are important to our well-being and can protect us from social threats such as stigma (Gumley et al., 2010, as cited in Wood et al., 2017, p. 553).

**Stigma experienced regarding career counselling.** Individuals who have difficulty crystallizing their career paths may be viewed as indecisive, unmotivated, less intelligent, and unsuccessful. To avoid being linked to these negative labels, individuals may avoid career services. This may be particularly true for career issues, since college students are surrounded by other students, teachers, and family members who may have expectations of what they should be doing with their lives. Students experiencing career-related difficulties may be reluctant to seek help to avoid negative reactions from close others (Ludwikowski, Vogel, & Armstrong, 2009, p. 409). Similar results are perceived in the research done by Nam and Park (2015) in Korea. Their study aimed to examine the construct validity of the Attitudes toward Career Counseling Scale (ATCCS) for Korean college students.

Given the central importance of career-related decisions for college students and the implications for students who do not successfully navigate the career development process in college and drop out (Cueso, 2005, as cited in Ludwikowski, Vogel, & Armstrong, 2009, p. 414), these results highlight the value of addressing stigma-related attitudes when designing or advertising career-related interventions in academic settings. Perceptions of public stigma
held by society and perceptions of personal stigma were both uniquely related to having negative attitudes toward seeking career counselling and increased self-stigma.

Thinking critically, the personal and public stigmas become internalized only on the basis of individual perception. Every type of counselling is treated with negative label in society but when it comes to career counselling, it is good to gather some knowledge for your own sake instead of being in the dark room of conservative information. Because of the presence of such stigmas in society, sometime students have second thought before approaching help seeking which decrease the options to pursue their own career interest. For instance, consider the example of the Korean college entrance examination which is extremely competitive, and students put enormous efforts into gaining entrance into the most prestigious universities and possible majors, rather than exploring interests as would be more typical in Western culture. This is because they often think attending a prestigious university is important, guaranteeing better job prospects and higher economic and social status after graduation (Kim & Kim, 1996, as cited in Nam & Park, 2015, p. 479), which is the best way to satisfy both their parents and society.

**Stigma experienced regarding career counselling within a cultural context.** Other research by Choi and Miller (2014) examined the effect of stigmas (public stigma, stigma by closed others, and self-stigma) on the attitude for seeking counselling through a cultural context. They have studied AAPI (Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islanders) mid-Atlantic college students’ willingness to seek counselling having Asian and European American cultural values. Researchers used four-point rating scale (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree) to rate the various stigmas showed in following table. These stigma perceptions can lead to reductions of one’s self-esteem or feelings of self-worth (Choi & Miller, 2014, p.344).

Table 2.3
List of Stigmas Perceived by Choi, & Miller for Career Counselling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stigma #1</strong></td>
<td>The Stigma Scale for Receiving Psychological Help (SSRPH), developed by Komiya, Good, and Sherrod (2000), measured individuals’ perceptions of the general public stigma associated with seeking counselling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stigma #2</strong></td>
<td>The Perceptions of Stigmatization by Others for Seeking Help (PSOSH; Vogel, Wade, et al., 2009) assesses the perception held by one’s social network that an individual’s decision to seek psychological help is socially unacceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stigma #3</strong></td>
<td>The Self-Stigma of Seeking Help (SSOSH; Vogel et al., 2006) assesses the perception held by individuals that seeking psychological help is socially unacceptable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researchers have found that Asian and European American cultural values differentially related to willingness to seek counselling indirectly through specific indirect pathways (public stigma, stigma by close others, self-stigma, and attitudes toward seeking professional help) (Choi & Miller, 2014, p.340). One possible explanation for this phenomenon might be that within the Asian cultural context, being different or going against the flow, is contrary to very strong societal and cultural norm against seeking counselling. Therefore, AAPI individuals who adhere to Asian cultural values may choose to avoid a stigmatizing behaviour such as seeking counselling. In addition, these individuals might fear that seeking counselling would damage their family’s reputation due to strong stigma by close others, which might result in the individuals’ development of negative attitudes toward seeking professional help and a lack of willingness to seek counselling (Choi & Miller, 2014, p.348). However, Asian Americans who adhere to European cultural values have placed a particular emphasis on self-enhancement and growth (Choi & Miller, 2014, p.348). Thus,
researchers have found that AAPI individuals who espouse higher levels of Asian cultural values are less positive about mental health services and less willing to seek counselling when they feel stigmatized about seeking counselling. However, AAPI individuals who espouse higher levels of European American cultural values are also less likely to feel stigmatized about seeking counselling and have more positive attitudes toward professional help (Choi & Miller, 2014, p.349).

Thinking critically, the population studied in this research does not give generalised evidence regarding the cultural effect on AAPI while seeking counselling because there might be diversity in AAPI group. This research only focused on AAPI college students’ particular group. Researchers have also identified that future researchers could test whether the magnitude or direction of relationships vary as a function of socioeconomic status or social class, developmental or attachment style, prior counselling experience, or presence/absence of acute clinical symptoms (Choi & Miller, 2014, p.349).

**Chapter Summary**

Although there are stigmas discussed in this Chapter however, there is no particular study that is focused on influence of such stigma (if it exists) on students who are pursuing vocational programmes. One cannot generalise these stigmas for different contexts, population sample, cultural influence, individual difference, mental awareness and diverse social patterns. The stigmas presented in this Chapter are discussed with the intention that they might have a relation with the stigmas pertaining in vocational sector. Moreover, there might be different results if research is being done on more than two or three different population samples having different cultural background from diverse socio-economic background and depending on the condition whether someone have been stigmatized or not.
Chapter 3: Procedures & Methods

Qualitative researchers are not putting together a puzzle whose picture they already know. They are constructing a picture that takes shape as they collect and examine the parts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2015, p. 425).

Introduction

The purpose of this Chapter is to describe the tool used to collect data, the appropriateness of research method, the use of research tool in other post-secondary researches, the procedure followed to conduct the research. This Chapter presents information about how the whole research is done, what were the main requirements to complete the research, who were the subjects in this research and what were the advantages to conduct this research? In brief, research overview and methodology state on what basis the research question was chosen and the characteristics of method used, the description of population studied states about the population sample being studied and how participants were recruited, the description of instrument states the method used to conduct the research and why this particular method fits well for this research, the description of procedure states steps followed to accomplish the research and finally, the validation of the research is being discussed at the end of the Chapter. The process of research design, population studied, instrument used, procedure followed and validity of research are presented in the following sections.

Research Overview and Methodology

This exploratory study inquired whether stigmas exist behind the decision making of vocational students at Vancouver Island University (VIU) when they choose their education/carrier path. If stigmas exist then how does it influence them? On the basis of
differences between vocational and academic career paths in accordance with social stigma as well as the educational divide, there is a mindset that vocational students are those who are non-academic, lower-performing as comparative to academic students (Brockmann & Laurie, 2016, p. 230). However, some educational researchers and scholars pushing back on this claim and arguing that vocational students are the same as academic students but just learn differently. The researcher of the present study gathered information on the basis of this distinction that how this mindset effect vocational students when these labels become internalized and self pertaining and get effected by public-stigma as well. The following is the table restating my research question and goals as in Chapter 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Hypothesis #1</th>
<th>Hypothesis #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>To what degree if any, do vocational students at VIU report regarding the presence of a social distinction (and attached stigma) of a person, based on their education path when comparing people from both Vocational and Academic paths?</td>
<td>Coaching and leading VET programmes will increase educators’ as well as students’ awareness regarding improving its reputation in the society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In qualitative research, structured and semi-structured interviews are often best conducted toward the end of a study, as they tend to shape responses to the researcher’s perceptions of how things are. They are most useful for obtaining information to test a
specific hypothesis that the researcher has in mind (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015, p. 449). Thus, the researcher of the present study has chosen the semi-structured interview to conduct the present study. Moreover, this qualitative method is chosen because it has following major characteristics.

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Characteristics of Qualitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Naturalistic inquiry</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying real-world situations as they unfold naturally; non-manipulative, unobtrusive, and non-controlling; openness to whatever emerges—lack of predetermined constraints on outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inductive analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important categories, dimensions, and interrelationships; begin by exploring genuinely open questions rather than testing theoretically derived (deductive) hypothesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Holistic perspective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The whole phenomenon under study is understood as a complex system that is more than the sum of its parts; focus is on complex interdependencies not meaningfully reduced to a few discrete variables and linear, cause-effect relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative data</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed, thick description; inquiry in depth; direct quotations capturing people’s personal perspectives and experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal contact and insight</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The researcher has direct contact with and gets close to the people, situation, and phenomenon under study; researcher’s personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dynamic systems</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention to process; assumes change is constant and ongoing whether the focus is on an individual or an entire culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unique case Orientation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes each case is special and unique; the first level of inquiry is being true to, respecting, and capturing the details of the individual cases being studied; cross-case analysis follows from and depends on the quality of individual case studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context sensitivity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places findings in a social, historical, and temporal context; dubious of the possibility or meaningfulness of generalizations across time and space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathic neutrality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete objectivity is impossible; pure subjectivity undermines credibility; the researcher’s passion is understanding the world in all its complexity—not proving something, not advocating, not advancing personal agendas, but understanding; the researcher includes personal experience and empathic insight as part of the relevant data, while taking a neutral nonjudgmental stance toward whatever content may emerge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design flexibility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to adapting inquiry as understanding deepens and/or situations change; avoids getting locked into rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness; pursues new paths of discovery as they emerge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 426).
This is why semi-structured interviews were a significant approach to conduct this research. Open-ended as well as close-ended questions were asked to accomplish the research (see questionnaire under appendix at the end of the thesis). The influence on decision making of vocational students while choosing education/career path due to classification between the vocational and academic courses and the stigma by labelling them non-academic was the main concern behind the questions asked during the semi-structured interview.

Even though this is the useful method to conduct the research however, there are some limitations of this research method. Interviewing vocational students using semi-structured interview might not accomplish the goal of the researcher because the participants might not aware about the stigma and they are happy with their choices of vocational courses. They might get always positive responses from their near and dear ones and even from society. So, the intention to conduct the research is addressing the stigma in vocational sector stayed unaddressed and asking questions about stigma might affect participants’ sense of self.

**Informal Survey and Thematic Analysis**

The questionnaire (see questionnaire under appendix at the end of thesis) used to interview the participants, includes questions regarding how did participants choose a particular vocational programme? Did anyone influence their decision making while choosing vocational programme? What are the opinions of their friends and family members regarding the courses participants are pursuing? Did anyone recommend them to go with different educational stream? Do they have any friends and family member who pursued the same programme? If yes, then is this the reason why participants choose their particular programme? If no, then how participants made a decision individually? And finally, what does the future goals participants have after completing their programmes?

Once the data was collected through above mentioned questionnaire, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. All responses were coded into different categories and
diverse patterns were formed out of it. There were not many responses that address the stigma discussed in this research however, there were some outliers that shows distinct kinds of stigma. Braun and Clarke (2006) and King (2004) argued that thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights (as cited in Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017,p. 2). The following is a six-phased method table documented by Braun and Clarke (2006) that shows step-by-step approach for conducting a trustworthy thematic analysis.

Table 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases of Thematic Analysis</th>
<th>Means of Establishing Trustworthiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data</td>
<td>Prolong engagement with data, Triangulate different data collection modes, Document theoretical and reflective thoughts, Document thoughts about potential codes/themes, Store raw data in well-organized archives, Keep records of all data field notes, transcripts, and reflexive journals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2: Generating initial codes</td>
<td>Peer debriefing, Researcher triangulation, Reflexive journaling, Use of a coding framework, Audit trail of code generation, Documentation of all team meeting and peer debriefings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3: Searching for themes</td>
<td>Researcher triangulation, Diagramming to make sense of theme connections, Keep detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 4: Reviewing themes</td>
<td>Researcher triangulation, Themes and subthemes vetted by team members, Test for referential adequacy by returning to raw data.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 5: Defining and naming themes</td>
<td>Researcher triangulation, Peer debriefing, Team consensus on themes, Documentation of team meetings regarding themes, Documentation of theme naming.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 6: Producing the report</td>
<td>Member checking, Peer debriefing, Describing process of coding and analysis in sufficient details, Thick descriptions of context, Description of the audit trail, Report on reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Nowell et al., 2017, p. 4).

The exact steps followed to come up with findings from collected data and how findings were subjected to thematic analysis using above mentioned phases has been discussed in fourth Chapter in detail.

**Description of the Population Studied**

The population for this study consisted of vocational students of VIU who are pursuing three vocational programmes in Nanaimo, BC. I chose this population because I am currently a student at VIU and for writing my thesis on this topic, it was best population to study. Moreover, I come from completely academic background. I did not get the exposure to the opportunities available for vocational skills at all. I wanted to explore this area in my research to get to know about how these skills are taught and how well they are organised in vocational programmes at VIU. I have recruited students in the following programmes for this study: Automotive (Building 150), Electrical Technology Training Facility (Building 115) and Carpentry (Building 108, room 140). I choose these three programmes because of
the limited amount of time I have to conduct this research on vocational students in Canada and my professional interest in learning about and supporting adult education at Vancouver Island University. Students’ preferences and perceptions while enrolling in these programmes were the main concern for gathering information in the present research.

The author of the present study is a student at VIU. The sampling criteria for the study required that the participants: 1) be enrolled in above mentioned three vocational program; 2) be at least 20+ years of age; 3) complete the consent form(for more information see consent form under appendix at the end of thesis document); and 4) be willing to participate in the research process.

**Description of the Instrument Used**

The researcher has taken semi-structured interviews to conduct this research. This method fits best for this research because of its qualitative nature. The obtained information through such interviews can later be compared and contrasted (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015, p. 449). For instance, Cutajar (2017) used semi-structured interviews to do phenomenographic research that explored the qualitative differences in post-secondary students’ accounts of their networked learning experiences. Another post-secondary research done by Sadaf, Newby, and Ertmer (2012) using semi-structured interviews was about exploring pre-service teachers’ beliefs about using web 2.0 technologies in K-12 classroom. Becker and Cooper (2014) used semi-structured interviews and open-ended surveys to gather information about college chemistry students’ understanding of potential energy in the context of atomic-molecular interactions. Thus, there are a number of post-secondary researches that have used semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data.

To conduct this research using informal surveys and thematic analysis, the interview table was set up in Building 108, Student Commons at VIU. To maintain the quality of the research, the researcher of the present study used recorder to record responses of the
participants during semi-structured interview (see questionnaire under appendix at the end of thesis document). The recorded data was transcribed afterwards and was stored in password protected computer which will be kept until May 31st, 2020.

**Explanation of the Procedures Followed**

The research was directed following various steps that include permission of the Research Ethics Board (REB) (see REB research approval certificate under appendix at the end of thesis) to conduct the research with vocational students at VIU. Before starting the research process, the potential participants were given a brief summary of the purpose of the study. Their participation was completely voluntary and all records of their participation were kept confidential. Participants were asked to read and sign the consent form. Participants’ responses were recorded and transcribed latter into electronic form. To analyse the data, thematic analysis was used for coding the data. Diverse patterns and outliers (read Chapter 4 for details) were found in collected data. Some patterns were addressing stigma while some stated great positive responses. And finally, various future recommendations are included (read Chapter 5 for details) for researchers who might like to continue the research. The following table summarise the procedure followed to direct the research.

Table 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step #1</th>
<th>Solicit approval from Research Ethics Board.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Step #2</td>
<td>Solicit permission to set up interview tables in the Vocational Building 108 (Trades Discovery Centre) in room no 110 (Student Commons).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step #3</td>
<td>The researcher of the present study gives recruitment letters with consent forms (see attached documents for more information) to participants on January 15, 2019.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step #4 The researcher of the present study interviewed students in Vocational Building 108 from January 20, 2018 to February 20, 2019 between 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

Step #5 The semi-structured interview (see attached questionnaire for more information) takes about 15 minutes per student and includes semi- and un-structured questions asked during interview to potential participants.

Step #6 The semi-structured interviews were recorded by using an audio recorder.

Step #7 The recordings were transcribed afterwards in electronic form in February 2019 for thematic analysis for the completion of my thesis.

Participants were explained the importance behind the participation in the research that emphasized on stigma between academic courses and vocational courses. When participants agreed for the terms and conditions to participate and willingly ready to be a part of the research, a copy of signed consent form was given to participants and also kept by researcher to maintain the records. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without explanation and were free to decline to answer particular questions if they did not want to withdraw from the research entirely. Participants were also informed that by being the part of research process and submitting the consent form they were providing their consent to participate in the study. The questions being asked demanded realistic answers to bring awareness regarding if stigma exist then how it is influencing vocational students when they choose their career path? What is the effect of stigma on vocational students when it became internalized or self-stigma or public-stigma due to the attached labels of non-academic and low-performing students to the vocational students?

Discussion of Validity

This research has immense importance because the researches which address the influence of stigma on vocational students in particular are under-represented. The results might bring awareness among educational leaders to address stigma if exist among
vocational students while enrolling in vocational programmes and as a consequence of low parity of esteem of VET sector. The research process emphasized on two different variables: if stigma exists, does it effect career decision making of vocational students while choosing a vocational programme and how does stigma influence vocational students when it became internalized or self-stigma or public-stigma due to attached label such as non-academic or low-performing students.

In addition, information regarding students’ awareness about their programmes after completing high school studies was another concern of the present research. The main purpose behind asking questions (see questionnaire under Appendix at the end of thesis document for more information) during semi-structured interviews was to gather information that on what basis they choose the programme, does anyone influence their decision and if they had any negative experience from closed others with respect to their programme. The data gathered was examined using qualitative as well as quantitative procedures. The quality of the research process was measured on the basis of responses being recorded by the researcher during semi-structured interview. The quantity is measured on the basis of number of students participated to complete the research process (read Chapter 4 for details) after being agreed on the terms and conditions that participants signed on the consent form.

**Limitations to Research Validity**

However, there were some responses of the participants which are not valid according to the research question addressed in the present study. Those responses were quite general or too personalised. There was no need to include them in data analysis (read Chapter 4 for more details). To keep the confidentiality of research data, those responses were invalid as they include participants’ family planning, influence of divorced parents on
participants’ career choice or whenever I ask different question and participants answered differently. So, such responses are not included in data analysis.

**Chapter Summary**

This Chapter described the research design and procedure followed to conduct the research. The step by step description gives clear information to the readers about the various steps taken to initiate the research, what were the steps taken during the research and what was done to collect data and analyse it at the end. This chapter give review of what steps used to complete the research, however it does not have any information about how steps were actually followed to reach the end results. Chapter 4 provides us information about how data was analysed, how it was coded, what were the patterns and findings found in data? and does the researcher get information required to address research question or not. The next chapter that is Chapter 4 has detailed information regarding all these questions.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis

I got good grades in high school. Everyone thought automatically that I would choose an academic path to become a doctor or lawyer. I do have respect for those people but when I choose trades instead of academic line, there was a lot of disappointment. My friends used to say like you were really smart in high school... why you choose trades. They think trades are for low-grade people. – (response of Participant #3).

Introduction

This Chapter presents information about potential participants, how research was conducted, the time and place where semi-structured interviews were taken to collect data. The Chapter is followed by a description about how the data was analysed, which technique was used to analyse data, what were the findings and results found in the data analysis. Some figures are included to show clear image of all findings and basic information of participants who participated voluntarily in the present research who are pursuing diverse vocational courses at different levels at VIU. The data collected provided rich information regarding distinct stigmas attached to VET sector. However, the stigma discussed in this research does not reflect through responses of participants.

About Vancouver Island University (VIU)

The Nanaimo Campus, located on the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation, VIU’s main campus in Nanaimo hosts an ocean-view campus, spanning 92 scenic acres, including lush stands of forest and Japanese gardens (https://www.viu.ca/about). VIU offer different VET programmes out of which vocational students from Automotive, Carpentry, and electronics have participated in this research. In each class, there were a range of 20 to 30 students who were pursuing foundational, advanced and apprenticeship programmes available at VIU campus. Students attend classes first for theoretical knowledge
and then apply that theory with the help of appliances provided to do things practically. This balance of theory and practical work at VIU for vocational students makes vocational programmes more attractive.

Programmes

There are diverse programmes offered by VIU Nanaimo campus. However, for this research, I have choose three vocational programmes - Automotive, Electrical Technology Training Facility and Carpentry that are pursued by students at different levels (see Fig. 1) in Building 150, Building 115 and Building 108, room 140 at Nanaimo campus, BC respectively. I choose these three programmes for data collection in my research because of the limited amount of research on vocational students in Canada and my professional interest in learning about and supporting adult education at Vancouver Island University. Figure 4.1 shows information about potential participants who participated in this research.

![Level](image)

*Figure 4.1. Names of various programmes with different levels.*

All three programmes included in this research have a time frame of completion in four years. Participants refer them as levels. So, by Level I mean the year participants pursuing in these programmes.

Interview Information
Seventeen participants were interviewed to collect the data for research. All participants were vocational students of age 20+ in above mentioned three programmes. To maintain the confidentiality of participants, participants are addressed with alphanumeric numbers from P1 to P17. Only two participants were part-time students and fifteen participants were full-time students. Within carpentry programme, two participants were from level two and three participants were from level three. Within automotive programme, seven students participated and all were from first level. Within electrical technology and training facility, there were three participants from level one and two participants were from level three. My focus regarding stigma is on adult education. So, all of my participants were over 20 years of age. Following figure shows number of participants included in research of different age.

![Age Distribution](image_url)

*Figure 4.2. Number of participants of different ages.*

All interviews were taken in Building 108, room 110 (Students’ Commons) during 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. The various questions were asked regarding programmes (see questionnaire under appendix at the end of thesis) that students are pursuing. Interviews started by asking general questions in the beginning to potential participants and then programme specific questions during the interview to gather information. Different
participants give different answers that are analysed below and discussed further in Chapter 5.

**Thematic Analysis and Results**

Semi-directed interviews were conducted with all respondents who were pursuing vocational programmes at different levels at VIU. Interviews covered information about how they choose their particular course, career encouragement, expectations from the programmes they (respondents) are pursuing, their friends and family expectation and perceptions about these programmes and respondents future goals. All interviews were subjected to thematic analysis as described in Chapter 3.

Although thematic analysis as documented by Braun and Clarke (2006) has been presented in table 3.2 as a linear, six-phased method, it is actually an iterative and reflective process that develops over time and involves a constant moving back and forward between phases (as cited in Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017, p. 4). By following these phases of thematic analysis, I first established open coding categories, then refined them taking specifically into account the elements of discourse relating to employment security, personal/favourite choice, experiential learning/escape from academia, options/job awareness, upgrading skills, short and specific training programmes, financial security, monetary feasibility, career change, friends and family support, knowledge matters, and positive responses. Lastly, I come up with some general responses and outliers as my findings. I use different colours to show different categories. Each colour depict that every category is formed on the basis of different responses that I get from participants. I put common responses together to create a category. The following figure shows coding categories using thematic analysis.
Findings

As mentioned above common responses were put together to create a category. The following are examples of responses that fall under each category found in data analysis.

**Employment security.**

- Job opportunities are endless in this trade right now.
- And I am pretty sure that I will get a job after doing this vocational course.
- Because I can get a job that can paid recently relatively quickly.
- And trades are a secure option to get the job whereas in academia you have to accept certain risk and as I said I didn’t get much information about job security if I do any academic programme. The students who are in training course now, they already get their employment insurance.
- I figured if I do this then it will be a quicker way to get into the work force and make money right away.

The above responses of participants state that before going for vocational programmes, participants already have in their mind that they will get employed once the programme is done. This gives them motivation to complete the programmes and satisfaction.
that their future is secure. However, these responses do not depict any vocational prejudice to address the stigma discussed in the research which supports the hypothesis #2 (see table 1.1).

**Personal/favourite choice.**

- For me, I love building. It is something that makes sense to me.
- I guess it seems more interesting through technical aspect.
- It just feeds me to think how to solve problem which I am really appreciating and I really like it. That is why I think this is best educational choice for me right now.
- I do not have any interest in other trades. This is something that I enjoyed doing. By getting red seal, I do not have to change my job necessarily.
- It is connected to computer engineering in some ways as well.
- Because I have a passion for automotive.
- Electrician is best for me because I do not like working outside.

The above responses of participants state that it was their personal interest in trades that gives them reason to choose vocational programmes over academics. Some participants choose particular vocational programme to apply their previous knowledge in that field that they get while being in academic programme. In the context of research question, these responses do not address any stigma which supports the hypothesis #2 (see table 1.1).

**Experiential learning/escape from academia.**

- While working with my hands, I can see my progress by standing by my work.
- I like to learn by working with my hands. I learn theory but you more get to know by doing. So, I think this is best educational choice according to my requirements right now.
- It really gives me hands on experience and I am working on actual customer’s vehicle and it gives me real life scenario.
For me I think this is because I am learning the theory in the classroom but the nice thing is we have an active shop for customers coming all the time. So, I am really experiencing what is going to be happening in the real world when I go to work not just the theory behind it.

I didn’t see myself as an academically inclined career seeker.

The whole reason I took the trades programme because I thought it will be easier.

I choose it to make some money and escape from academia.

I was done working behind the computers.

The above responses of participants state that they like vocational programmes because of its practical aspect. They like the balance between theory and hands on experience of vocational programmes. Moreover, they feel the freedom of such study as an escape from academia. They learn by practically doing the things that gives them chance to observe their work in real life scenario. In the context of research question, we cannot say that these responses do not depict any stigma at all. As a student from academic background, I can observe from the responses that some of the participants think that they are not academic career seeker even when they are in vocational programmes, they learn theory as well. I agree that curriculum content and theory of vocational programmes tend to be less than in academic programmes (as cited in Nylund et al., 2017, p. 802). However, this kind of mindset categorizes vocational students as non-academic students that pertains public stigma.

**Options/job awareness.**

I decided to get in this programme because I wanted to something that would give me a ticket for most places to live.

I decided to enrol in this programme based on occupation availability for jobs though online job advertisement.
This trade gives you broad spectrum and really a touch to all trades because you get to oversee people putting mechanical hardware.

It was really hard to get information about will I be able to get a job or is there any demand after doing a particular academic programme or not. But I was pretty sure that I will be able to get a job when it comes to construction, maintenance, electronic courses.

I just don’t have like resources to study something that I cannot use to get a job basically.

The above responses of participants state that students have better awareness regarding job opportunities when it comes to vocational programmes. One of my participants who searched for job opportunities in academics specified that he did not get much information regarding career one can pursue after completing a degree whereas when it comes to vocational programmes, there is quick transition for school to work. In the context of research question, these responses do not depict any stigma that supports the hypothesis #2 (see table 1.1).

**Upgrading skills.**

It is good to have knowledge to do stuff on the houses and it is beneficial when it come to build your own house.

I was notified that the programme is going to be updated at my work. I did my two years of carpentry 10 years ago. So, I would have to start over if I don’t finish it by 2020. So, I am here to complete my full course.

Now, I am 26. So, I realized that I need to do a job that can take me to where I want to be in my life.

This way, I get a bit more time to work on my skill and make myself organised.
Well, I can gather more knowledge about what I am already doing in the real world at job and I can put my knowledge at work as well to upgrade myself. The above responses of participants state that when they learn by practically experiencing work, they get the opportunity to improve their skills because they can observe their work and apply the theory they learn in class. They do not have to wait to get this experience until they get employed. They get the chance to have this experience during their course work. This helps them in upgrading their skills. These responses do not depict any stigma. Thus, it supports the hypothesis #2 (see table 1.1).

**Short & specific training programs.**

- I am good at maths but I don’t want to dedicate four or seven years of straight school.
- Right now I do not feel like I can dedicate that full amount of time to complete law programme.
- I didn’t want to go to school for long time.
- And how it is short. You do not have to do a full year only seven weeks at a time.
- I had hard time to organise myself for academics. So, academically I am disorganised.
- Instead of doing like four years of school and then like doing a job or getting a degree that does not trends like a vocation.

The above responses of participants state that academics require long-term dedication whereas vocational programmes are short and specific. They get to know the things that are required at work place. The time frame and organisation of vocational programmes seems more pleasing to students than academic programmes. However, even these responses do not depict any stigma (personal, public and self) and thus supports the hypothesis #2 (see table 1.1).

**Financial security.**

- And potentially make more money in future.
There is financial security.

Also a pay increase obviously.

It is a secure job where you can make a lot of money.

You can earn better being in this vocational course.

The fact is we get paid while we are in school which is a big bonus for us.

The above responses of participants state that vocational programmes give them opportunity to afford their studies while being a student and earn more in future as well. This financial security prospects bright future for vocational students. In the context of research question, these responses do not depict any stigma and thus support the hypothesis #2 (see table 1.1).

Monetary feasibility.

Vocational courses give you financial security and job security because the money you pay for academics in one year is equal to the money required to complete this vocational programme.

By resources, I mean money because school is costly.

I am more interested in academic stuff but it does not seem feasible for me to go to school for six years or whatever because I am struggling financially.

Also, I do not have the money to afford to go to school for four years.

But I did not have the money to afford an academic programme.

School is costly . . . So even if I did want to go to school it was not even much as an option.

My financial stress was interfering with my studies.

The above responses of participants state that participants were struggling financially. According to them academic programmes are expensive than vocational programmes. The public or personal stigma would pertain here if one thinks that vocational students are from
lower economic background. However, actually they were living independently and wanted to afford their studies by themselves. Most of the participants were willing to go to academic programmes once they earn some money being in vocational programmes and working in the same field for a while afterwards so that they do not have to take study loans to afford further study.

**Career change.**

- Before I was studying computer engineering.
- I completed here two years of music course that is my initial interest but I didn’t pass it and I go into depression. So, I dropped out.
- I used to do auto body and I don’t want to do it anymore.
- So, I actually pursued physiotherapy for a number of years. But, after a few years of physiotherapy at university, I realised it isn’t what a really want to do.
- After high school, I did my two years degree of environment study at Langara College.
- I am here to get some money first because I will go back to computer engineering but I don’t want to take tones of student loans for that. I will go back latter on once I earn bit money being in this trade.
- Originally, I wanted to be a biologist and I started to do Bachelor of Science after my high school. I did my two years and then I had some health issues and then I end up working for a while. After that it was hard to get into the course again. So, I choose automotives because it needs scientific reasoning that connects a link with my previous knowledge.

The above responses of participants state that participants were juggling between different career paths before enrolling in vocational programmes. Most of them tried to continue on academic path after finishing high school studies. However, because of their
personal interest, health issues, financial struggle and mental state etc. They were not able to continue. Then they come to know about vocational programmes where they get paid while being a student and can get some time to make themselves academically organised. These responses again support the hypothesis #2 (see table 1.1) as there is no stigma at all.

**Friends and family support.**

- Well, I have some friends of mine that are electricians. They told me it is a good course.
- And my roommate encourages me as well.
- I think because my father is a carpenter and I grew up watching him. It was the best known trade for me. So, that is why I chose it.
- I get my interest in carpentry gradually as I said my dad was the one who make me familiar with it. But, I come to know that I want to do it after couple of years of physiotherapy.
- The influence came from my dad. My dad encouraged me to go for electronic because it also overlaps with my musical interest.
- Ya, my co-workers and my boss even encourage me to go to school and do apprenticeship.

The above responses of participants state that participants get encouragement from their near and dear ones to get enrolled in vocational programmes. Some just followed their family history while some come to know about their interest in trades after couple of years in different fields. Their family members and friends were quite supportive to their career choice. So, there is no stigma at all which supports the hypothesis #2 (see table 1.1).

**Knowledge matters.**

- Trades are not really depending on grades. It is not really like pass or fail. There is no discrimination at all.
Grades do not decide what you want to be but your interest decides definitely.

The above responses of participants state that vocational students get a feeling of belongingness while being in vocational programmes as nobody is categorized on the basis of how high grades they get in their studies. This is because trade and completely knowledge based. If you have interest you will get to know things more easily and quickly. These responses do not depict stigma at all. Thus, it supports the hypothesis #2 (see table 1.1).

Positive responses.

- Ya, I have people saying that it is a good trade to get into and it is a good time to get into this trade. There is a lot of potential in this trade.
- Ya, most people I talk to think it is a good idea to get in trade.
- But, they think it is great that you are going to get your ticket.
- They think it is good.
- My family thinks it is a good career choice.
- They are quite supportive.
- Mostly, positive responses. People will say oh electrical trades, there is a lot of jobs in that.
- I think nowadays, when I tell people that I am doing trades, I think it is lot more accepted now by people because they know that you can earn great wage. You can earn $80,000 per year as an electrician which is not minor right. So, I think when I tell people nowadays, I get better response than in the past.

The above responses of participants state that they always get positive responses from people as well as friends and family member regarding their career choice. They never get stigmatized response from anyone. However, there were some outliers as well which are given below:

- Trades are interesting than academics.
• Being academic student means educated person whereas being vocational student means manual worker.

• Positive response from friends from academics.

• Carpentry does not require schooling.

• Trades are for low-grade students.

• Stigma with trades.

These outliers depict stigmas perceived in participant responses. For example, the statement “trades are for low-grade students” pertains public, personal as well as self stigma. One of my participants responds that he got nice grades in high school but he chose trades instead of academics. As a consequence, he got negative reactions from his family and friends. His family members have already thought in mind that their son will become a lawyer or doctor. Participant said when I told them that I want to go into trades they were not supportive at all that pertains personal stigma. Even his friends encouraged him to go for academics but he wanted to do trades. For a while, he said I was totally in a fit. I always thought about what I should do. This pertains self-stigma. In the context of research question, there was public stigma and personal stigma that pertains in these outliers. We will discuss them in detail in Chapter 5.

**Chapter Summary**

The research was done to address the stigma (if it exists) while comparing a person based on what educational path is being pursued by the person. We discussed responses under 12 categories. However, most of the categories do not depict the stigma discussed in the research. 80% of the findings were negative in terms of addressing stigma because participants and their loved ones were quite happy with their trade career choice. Participants had rational reasons to support their decision making of career choice. Remaining 20% findings were positive which shows stigma pertains in some situations however, it depends
on one’s perception as well. We will discuss findings in detail in the next Chapter 5 and what future studies can be done to continue this research
Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

I know there are people who maybe look down when it comes to trades. My dad is a plumber. Plumbing and electrical is similar in lots of ways. So, I do not see one is better than the other. But when I mention that my dad is a plumber to people, they say oh you do not want to do that, you do not want to go to fix people’s toilet. I think people have lack of understanding of trades in general and how much it actually takes. (response of Participant #17)

Introduction

This Chapter represents major findings, discussion of analysis and makes future recommendations. The findings are elaborated in detail that includes how patterns were formed, what kind of pattern in the responses of participants reflect in each category and what were the outliers in the responses of participants. Findings are discussed under each category and outlier. This Chapter describes representation of each category associated with participants’ responses. A relation of literature and further studies have been formed that can be explored to continue this research. My focus was only on addressing the stigma in this research. However, one can further gather information based on question asked at the end of this Chapter.

Correlation of Themes and Present Research

The literature reviewed for this research identified three major themes. These three themes are further classified into four different categories i.e. cross-cultural study, family history, educational institutions, and role of media and technology. These themes directly relate to my research question because this literature supports the area that I have not explored in this research. I did not interview any student who is from academic background.
However, in my research question, I am trying to compare the responses of vocational students on the basis of prejudice regarding academic person and vocationally-trained person. So, responses are being compared in accordance with previous literature.

**Theme #1: Overcoming Vocational Prejudice**

This theme included the definition of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes and why VET sector is considered for people who are from low socioeconomic background. I did some cross-cultural study for it. In Arab society, manual work is perceived as the domain of the lowest social classes and of slaves. In United Kingdom, World Skill Competition (WSC) held in London which is an incredible competition equivalent to the Olympics, but there was not anyone really media-wise. Media was not interested to cover these competitions because of the low-status of VET. In Asia, there is widespread assumption prevalent in general that only the highest educational degrees contribute to an elevated social standing in society and provide the highest return on investment in education. In European Union/Members, to overcome vocational prejudice, a shift from a supply-to a demand-driven vocational skills approach is proposed that requires multilevel partnership approaches with a strong role of industrial actors in policy making. In Central and Eastern European Countries, curriculum reform has been done to overcome these traditional judgements. However, it increased costs of educational provision, less transparency and quality delayed restructuring of apprentice schools, budget problems, teachers’ salaries, recruitment and training, etc. Moreover, employers while recruiting graduates preferred to recruit graduates with a broad and traditional academic education prizing especially those with qualification from “elite” universities. English education system always tried to make vocational education more practical and relevant to the workplace which limits the intellectual development of vocational students at a relatively early age.

**Theme #2: The Vocational-Academic Divide**
Under this theme, at the time of transition from high school to university studies, researchers have found that mostly students follow their family history. If family members were from academic background, then their children also choose same academic career. If family members were from vocational background, then their children choose trade over academics without exploring other options in both cases. Researchers have observed that adolescents from families with high educational statuses are exposed to more opportunities and are given more support than their lower status peers. If we talk about educational institutions, university selection processes favour children with the most educated parents from the highest social statuses. This kind of partiality widens the division between vocational and academic programmes. A study done on three Nordic countries (Finland, Iceland, and Sweden) has shown that there is core division between what we here call “academic programmes,” which prepare students for higher education at university level, and “vocational programmes,” which focus on providing training for specific trades & occupations. There are separate departments, separate faculty, separate budgets, separate turf & power dynamics. Now egos & pay-checks enter the mix. These multiple separations lead to political tensions & self-protective behaviours that work against curricular integration. Another study done in United States has categorized students in both educational paths as abstract minded and manually minded. This hits vocational students’ self-esteem who then started identifying themselves as “practical learners” rather than being called “non-academic” student.

The results were quite similar of the research that is done in Canada’s provinces British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec. In Canada, Vocational education generally denotes lower abilities and motivation, and is not always viewed favourably by employers who can choose from college and university trained individuals instead of choosing students who are from technically-trained institutions. This unfairness is because the educational
background of the former group suggests that they possess the greatest potential to succeed in a particular profession. This preconception is not because of any surprising reasons. Just like in other countries, students who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds, may be facing problems pertaining to health, poverty or addiction are pushed into VET sector. Some are juggling school & employment with other transitions linked to marriage and family. Moreover, because of the loose link between qualification & work, one has to choose one or the other as changing career path once you are in VET sector to academic is not quite simple. Instead of all these factors, Quebec and Ontario has setup ongoing public campaigns to make VET more attractive for young students and parents as compared to academics which have positive results as well.

**Theme #3: The Role of Personal, Self & Public Stigmas**

Third theme is “the role of personal, self & public stigmas.” In this theme, definition of stigma, conceptualization of stigma, types of stigma, and experiencing stigma under different circumstances has been discussed. There is no single definition of stigma and it can be conceptualized in different ways. Six types of stigmashave been defined out of which only three stigmas are discussed in this research. Stigma experienced regarding Severe Mental Illness (SMI)and Career counselling is explored in detail to find its relation with stigmas experienced by students in VET sector because research addressing such stigma is under-represented. Students avoid taking career counselling because they think they will be considered by others as indecisive, unmotivated, less intelligent & unsuccessful. If we talk about cultural difference, students having Asian cultural values indoctrinated that within the Asian cultural context, being different or going against the flow, is contrary to very strong societal & cultural norm against seeking counselling. It might cause harm to their family’s reputation. Whereas, students with European American cultural values were willing to
explore options and take counselling for their career decisions. Awareness and career growth was the mindset behind their choices.

This was the information that I get to strengthen the background of my study through literature review. The stigma I discussed in this research does not pertain in data that I have collected. However, there is distinct kind of stigma observed in responses of participant.

**Discussion of Findings**

There were twelve categories found in the patterns of responses of participants. The findings and results that emerged from thematic analysis of responses of vocational students are further discussed in this Chapter. The following table shows each category with its representation and brief responses related to them.

Table 5.1

*Representation of Categories Associated with Participants’ Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories found in data analysis</th>
<th>Representation of each category</th>
<th>Brief responses of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment security</td>
<td>It depicts one’s mindset behind choosing vocational career path over academics.</td>
<td>Participants responded that they are learning by doing just like working in real life scenario and they have a lot of awareness about options they can pursue after the completion of their programme. This gives them satisfaction of quick transition from school to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Options/job awareness</td>
<td>It shows one’s awareness regarding opportunities one can pursue after completing vocational programmes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential learning/escape from academia</td>
<td>It shows the learning by doing nature of vocational programmes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career change</td>
<td>It shows the option to start VET programmes even when one come from different educational background.</td>
<td>According to participants, there is no discrimination at all. In trades nobody ask you about your grades. It just depend how much you know and how much you are willing to learn. And because of practical learning, they upgrade their skills as they can watch themselves while working on real things. Some participants were juggling between different career paths. When they come to know about VET programmes, they were quite happy that they can change their career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrading skills</td>
<td>It shows the results of practical learning one can observe while working in real life scenario.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge matters</td>
<td>It shows that there is no categorization in trades on the basis of grades one get in previous studies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Financial security

It shows that one can earn while being a vocational student and in future as well. Participants responded that academics require long-term dedication whereas vocational programmes are short and specific and these programmes are not as much expensive as academics. So, we can afford to pay as we get paid here as well when we do things practically. It gives them financial security as they do not have to take student loans to afford their studies.

Monetary feasibility

It shows that one can afford to pay on its own for his or her vocational studies as comparative to academics.

Short & specific training programs

It shows the quick transition from school to work as vocational programmes does not take that much time of students as academics take.

Friends and Family support

This shows positive support of near and dear ones for one’s career choice. Mostly participants were happy with their choices. They were never compared on the basis of what they are pursuing in trades and what academics offers in terms of opportunities. Mostly their friends and family members were quite supportive and positive regarding their career choice.

Personal/favourite choice

This shows one choose trades over academics because of personal interest without any outer influence.

Positive responses

This shows positive responses one get from others regarding their career choice.

In addition, six outliers were found in the responses of participants that report distinct stigma than the stigma discussed in this research. The following table illustrates outlier with representation associated with participants’ responses.

Table 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outliers found in data analysis</th>
<th>Representation of each outlier</th>
<th>Particular responses of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trades are interesting than academics.</td>
<td>It shows trades seem more attractive to vocational students because of the time frame and organisation of courses in vocational programmes.</td>
<td>Carpentry is a way where you want to be and a job for going and pursuing. It is not just kind of being lazy like not going to school and settling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being academic student means educated person whereas being vocational student</td>
<td>It shows vocationally-trained person is always perceived as manual minded and academic person is</td>
<td>But I think there is a stigma that if you do not go to school you cannot be successful. I thing that stigma need to be taken away because in reality you can be successful as electrician and as a teacher as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>means manual worker.</td>
<td>perceived as abstract minded.</td>
<td>Positive response from friends from academics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive response from friends from academics.</td>
<td>It shows there was no judgement by others on the basis of what educational path is pursued by a person.</td>
<td>Positive response from friends from academics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpentry does not require schooling.</td>
<td>It shows carpentry does have that high social status in society as other trades have.</td>
<td>Positive response from friends from academics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades are for low-grade students.</td>
<td>It shows there is a mindset present in society that categorizes vocational programmes is for non-academic students.</td>
<td>Positive response from friends from academics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stigma with trades.</td>
<td>It shows that there is still an existence of stigma that associate vocationally trained person to a mark or discrimination in society.</td>
<td>Positive response from friends from academics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first outlier depicts that vocational students think trades are interesting than academics in terms of how they are organised in coursework, how they are balanced in theory and practical, and how trades are more job-oriented. The second outlier shows up in the responses of participants when initially they were asked to pursue academics because according to the people who recommend them to pursue academics, being academic student
means educated person whereas being vocational student means manual worker which is not the case anymore. Because of the less awareness about vocational coursework, some people still have mindset that trades means manual work. However, some participants get positive responses from their friends who are in academics as well which addresses the third outlier. According to them, both routes have their own characteristics. They should not be compared. So, they were happy with each other’s choice. If we talk about stigma, the fourth outlier states that Carpentry does not require schooling. One of the participants from carpentry programme says that his friends said that he should have chosen some other trade as carpentry is a general trade. According to them carpentry can be done without going through any qualification which is an absurd. Because in my opinion, carpentry does include knowledge of proper measurements, mathematics, and diverse calculations skills as it is about building houses and constructing different things. So, a person without going through qualification or without certification cannot construction work. The second last outlier states that trades are for low-grade students. One of my participants got nice grades in high school. He was told by his near and dear ones to pursue academics instead of trades as trades is a route for students who do not do well in academics which is baseless again. Trades require rational thinking and problem solving attitude. If a person is not good in academics, he or she will not be able to do well in trades as well because both require same basic mental growth to develop ideas and for learning new things. Finally, the last outlier states stigma with trades which reflect when one of the participant said that he get positive response for what he has chosen as compared to his father. His father is a plumber but he chose automotive. His friends supported him for his choice by saying that choosing automotive over plumbing is a good choice as you do not have to fix toilets of people as if plumbing only include toilet fixing. So, these were the outliers found in participants responses. In terms of future goals, respondents were very really positive. Everyone was willing to complete the course and get
red seal. And then open up their own business or work in a company or take over their family trade business. Some were willing to discover new technologies to make trades work easier for people and approachable within their community.

The above mentioned outliers are important in this research because they depict distinct kind of stigma than the stigma discussed in this research. The responses of participants clarify that each outlier has its own impression on one’s mindset to perceive it. Though, we cannot generalise any results from these outliers yet we can get awareness regarding how stigma pertains in different circumstances and how it depends on one’s mindset to perceive stigma or to take it in a positive way.

**Recommendations for the Future**

All of the participants were males. Even while reviewing literature, this point has also come in concern that mostly males take VET programmes. However, my focus of interest was different in this research but one can do future study that relate to the question that “Why do mostly males take VET programmes?”

While reviewing literature, I come to know about “transition education.” Transition education was described by Jallade as a set of approaches that aimed to be tailored to the needs of very diverse groups, went beyond cognitive skills (associated with general education), included different approaches to the structuring of knowledge and skills and introduced different forms of organisation (e.g. modularisation) and assessment (Jallade, 1989, as cited in Gordon, 2015, p. 444). However, I have not explored this term much. I think this is an interesting form of education to know about. So, further studies can be done to know “What does transition education include?”

Grootings (1991, as cited in Gordon, 2015, p. 447) postulated that a modern VET system would look very different from the one inherited from the previous regime, underlining that it would take some years for it to take shape and become fully operational.
He described the shift from a system with more or less direct and exclusive relations between the school system and the production system towards one that would have to cope with a higher degree of uncertainty (market forces) and to respond to new interest groups (e.g. private employers and independent trade unions) as well as to completely new phenomena, such as high levels of unemployment, and to work with new institutions, such as local employment offices. Schools, training centres and enterprises would also have to redefine their roles and their relationships with each other. So, one can explore further about “What will modern VET system exactly include differently than the one we have right now?”

In cross-cultural study in India, disciplinary connection or linkage of vocational and general education does not exist. The ability to change from vocational education to general education courses later is not possible (Jambo & Pilz, 2018, p. 16). In Sweden, although the VET and HEP syllabuses for foundation courses are similar up to a point, the VET courses inevitably cover significantly fewer areas of content (Nylund, Rosvell, Ledman, 2017, p. 802). Sedunary (1996, as cited in Fisher & Simmons, 2012, p. 39) have advocated connective specialisation over the traditional form of divisive specialisation. This supplanting would support the transition towards a curriculum which would encapsulate flexibility and breadth; strong links between specialist and core studies, and academic and vocational learning; progression facilitated by credit transfer; and a clear direction. My motive behind describing this literature again here is further studies can be done on the topic that “Does credit transfer or ability to change from vocational to general education courses available in Canada?”

In this research, all participants were from vocational programmes. I have not interviewed any student from academic background for this research. Their perspectives, their reasoning, their knowledge regarding the stigmas that are explored in this research might be completely different than what vocational students think. To know on what basis do
they choose their courses, one can do further study about “What are the views of students in academic programmes regarding their courses and vocational courses?”

In literature review and even in general, we know media has really little focus on this issue of stigma pertaining in vocational sector. This is a burning issue as a number of students graduate every year from vocational sector. However, while recruiting graduates by companies to give them employments, these students are generally regarded as manual workers or preferred less on the basis of potential skills required to do such jobs. So, further studies can be done to know “Why do media not focus on spreading the importance of VET programmes on large scale?”

Finally, I have observed at VIU, vocational students are provided all tools that they need to do practical work and having theoretical knowledge regarding their courses. To know is this the same in other provinces or places where there is VET programmes, one can explore “How much government is investing in VET sector to improve the quality of programmes?”

**Conclusion**

Even though I tried to explore stigma in this research, not more than two or three participants’ actually discussed stigma in their responses. We cannot generalize the information gathered on such a small population sample from same culture regarding stigma pertains or not. I am from a small city in Punjab, India where there is really little considerations for such skills. That is why I chose his topic. As an international student from academic background, I used to think that one has to be academically inclined to be successful in life. However, when I started my research, depending on culture, educational opportunities, mindset of people, availability of courses, and with the consideration of everyone’s opinion, my opinions and perceptions also changed. I didn’t find it much difficult to eliminate stigma (if it exists) in English education system as a number of initiative has been taken already to address this stigma. In nutshell, one has to interview students of
different cultures, educational paths and student populations to generalise specific results through this research.
References


Appendix

TCPS Certificate

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Sandeep Kaur

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

Date of Issue: 13 January, 2018

Recruitment Letter

I am Sandeep Kaur, a student of Master of Education in Leadership doing research on Vocational programmes at Vancouver Island University. The purpose of this research is to learn how personal and social stigmas can affect decision making by vocational students and help educational leaders mitigate negative stigmas for students enrolled at Vancouver Island University. To find ways to decrease the personal and social stigmas and their influence on student decision making when choosing an education/career path at Vancouver Island University, I am inviting you to be a part of this research. I will be interviewing students in the Vocational Building 108 (Trades Discovery Centre) in Room Number 110 (Student Commons). I am recruiting students in the following programmes for this study: Automotive (Building 150), Electrical Technology Training Facility (Building 115) and Carpentry (Building 108, room 140) because of the limited amount of research on vocational students in
Canada and my professional interest in learning about and supporting adult education at Vancouver Island University. If you agree to participate in this study, this semi-structure interview should take about thirty minutes to complete using an audio recorder. Your participation will be fully confidential and no personalised information will be used in this research and the thesis I am completing for my Master’s. If you agree to participate, please complete the attached consent form to be included in this research. Your participation and contribution to this research is greatly appreciated and you have the right to withdraw from this study at any point during the interview you participate in. You can also withdraw from this study before the publication of my completed thesis next spring. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about this research.

Consent Form

*Academic and Vocational Programmes in British Columbia*

**Principal Investigator**
Sandeep Kaur, Student
Master of Education in Educational Leadership
Vancouver Island University

**Student Supervisor**
Dr. Michael Hammond-Todd.
Thesis Supervisor
Vancouver Island University

Michael.Hammond-Todd@viu.ca

I am a student in the Master of Education in Educational Leadership programme at Vancouver Island University (VIU). My research, entitled *Academic and Vocational Programmes in British Columbia*, aims to identify social distinctions and attached stigma based on which a person chooses a career path. I have observed the importance of educational research related to student engagement and choice in educational decisionmaking at the university level. More specifically, I am interested in learning how educational stigmas might affect students’ decisionmaking when choosing a course of study. For some there is a social distinction attached to a stigma that implies the value of a person’s worth depending on
whether they have pursued an academic or a vocational educational program. Three types of stigmas are explored in this research including: public stigma, personal stigma, and self-stigma. The stigma that has an influence through the direct personal reactions of those with whom we interact is termed personal stigma. The influence of stigma at the societal level is usually referred to as public stigma, and when the effect of these stigmas is internalized in an individual, then it becomes self-stigma. This research is being done to discover whether or not these stigmas exist for university students considering a vocational career and how university administrators might minimize negative stigmas for students at Vancouver Island University.

Each research participant is asked to complete a semi-structured research interview. If you agree, you would be asked questions concerning your vocational course that you are pursuing, course interest, and background support to choose a particular course. With your permission, the interview would be audio recorded. Your participation would require approximately 30 minutes of your time. Your participation will be coded to maintain your privacy in this research study. The use of coded responses in the published thesis will keep your identity confidential as well.

The information collected during the interview is likely to be controversial because I am going to ask you questions related to stigmas that may affect a person’s sense of self. Depending on the information you provide, there is a possibility that the information you provide might feel uncomfortable or embarrassing. You have the right to withdraw from this study at any point in time during the interview or before the final thesis is published. However, this research is important to help identify ways universities manage programmes and students navigate vocational and academic educational paths.

If you choose to participate, all records of your participation would be kept confidential. Only my supervisor and I will have access to information in which you are identified. With your permission, the interview would be audio recorded and later transcribed into electronic
form. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any
time and for any reason without explanation and can decline to answer particular questions if
you do not want to withdraw from the research entirely.

If you would like to review and potentially make changes to the transcript of the
interview, you may request a copy from the researcher at any time during this research. If you
choose to withdraw from the study, all information you provided during the interview would
be withdrawn from the study and destroyed. Electronic data will be stored on a password-
protected computer. Signed consent forms and paper copies of interview transcripts will be
stored in a locked file cabinet at my office. Electronic data will be deleted and any hardcopies
shredded at the end of this research project (May 31st, 2020).

Once the thesis is published, it is not possible to withdraw your data from this research.
The results of this study will be presented in my master’s thesis, and will be distributed
publically within VIU’s library.

I have read and understand the information provided above, and hereby consent to
participate in this research under the following conditions:

I consent to the interview being audio recorded. [ ] Yes [ ] No

I consent to being quoted in the products of the research. [ ] Yes [ ] No

Participant Name ____________________ Participant Signature ____________________

I, Sandeep Kaur, promise to adhere to the procedures described in this consent form.

Principal Investigator Signature ____________________ Date ____________________

If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study,
please contact the VIU Research Ethics Board by telephone at 250-740-6631 or by email at
reb@viu.ca. You can also contact my supervisor Dr. Michael Hammond-Todd at Michael.Hammond-Todd@viu.ca.

Participants should be provided a copy of the signed consent form.

**Questionnaire**

1.) Are you 20 or older? (If the answer is less than 20, researcher will stop the interview).

2.) Are you a full-time or a part-time student?

3.) What programme are you in?

4.) How did you decide to enrol in this particular programme?

5.) Are there friends or family members who have pursued the same programme you are in? If yes, then is this the reason you chose this programme?

6.) Did somebody other than a friend or family member encourage you to choose a particular program? If no, go to the next question. If yes, would you please share the reason they recommended it for you? *Skip to Question #7*

7.) *Question for students responding no to Question #6.* Can you describe how you individually chose to enrol in the vocational program at VIU?

8.) Why do you think this programme is the best educational choice for you at this time?

9.) Have you experienced any public comments about your vocational course or programme? If yes, then would you like to share the comments and potential influence they may have had on you? **Prompt:** By comments I mean positive and negative responses you may have received from other people when having discussion about your vocational programme.

10.) What do your friends and family think about the programme you chose?

11.) Are there friends or family members with different recommendations you would like to share?

12.) What future goals do you have after completing your programme at VIU?